





CHRONICLES OF "THE LITTLE SISTERS"

BY

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A Little Emigrant, etc.*



NOTRE DAME, INDIANA:
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Jan. 11. 1900.

TO "THE
LITTLE SISTERS OF
THE POOR."

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CHRONICLES OF "THE LITTLE SISTERS."

I.

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

IT was my custom at one time to pay a weekly visit to the Home for the Aged in charge of the Little Sisters of the Poor; and in this manner I became very well acquainted with many of the inmates, both male and female. As a rule, these children of poverty are garrulous in their old age, and not indisposed to reveal their histories to a sympathetic soul. Many of them have very sad stories to tell; one often wonders how they have been able to survive their misfortunes. And the responsive heart, thrilled to the core by these recitals of misery and privation, offers a prayer of thankfulness to God, who has mercifully provided for them a quiet haven, where they may spend at

least the few remaining days of life in peace.

One day, while passing through the infirmary, I observed a new face on one of the pillows. It was a sweet, pathetic face, framed in bands of yellowish white hair, that must have been a light golden blonde in youth. A pair of soft brown eyes looked up at me, as I paused at the bedside. "Come, do not stop now," whispered the Sister who accompanied me. "Later I will tell you about her. At present she is too feeble to speak." I followed obediently; and the incident soon passed from my mind, as the Sister had no time to explain further, being summoned elsewhere.

A few weeks afterward I saw the same old woman sitting on the steps of the chapel, her rosary in her hand. She wore no cap; a red handkerchief was tied loosely under her chin, and another of the same gay pattern was crossed over the bosom of her blue and white cotton frock.

"Good-morning!" I said, pausing for a moment. "Are you enjoying the sunshine?"

“*Guten Morgen!*” she replied, pleasantly. “*Ich spreche nicht Englisch.*”

Then finding that I understood a little of her native tongue, she made room for me on the step beside her, and began to babble, in a sweet low voice, on the beauty of the sunlight and the healthfulness of fresh air. I gave her a rose from the bouquet I had gathered for St. Joseph. She kissed it and laid it tenderly on her lap.

Just then the Sister with whom I had visited the infirmary on the day of my first meeting with the old woman came briskly across the yard, carrying a faded cotton umbrella in her hand.

“See what I have found, Frau Weisman!” she said gaily, in German. “If you will sit in the sun all day long, you must at least have some shelter for your head in the hottest hours.” So saying she raised the umbrella, which the old woman took, with many thanks.

“Poor thing!” said the kind nun, after we had left her. “She was so long shut out from the sun and light that she never can get enough of it, now that she is free.”

“Free!” I exclaimed. “Surely that

kind-faced, lovely old woman was never in prison?"

"Yes," replied my companion, setting her lips hard together—"in prison and underground, chained too, for nearly seven years. Ah, it is a terrible story! You have observed the unnatural pallor of her countenance. That accounts for it."

"Might a stranger know her story?" I asked. "What you say seems scarcely creditable."

"So you will think when you have heard it all," said the Sister. "Indeed, the whole world ought to know the story, and it is not from me that the edict of silence shall go forth. Come, sit with me in my little mending room; we shall be alone, and I have still half an hour before dinner."

When I had placed my flowers in water before a statue of St. Joseph, the busy little creature drew a rocking-chair to the open window and bade me be seated; then, while vigorously plying her needle in and out of a sorely dilapidated stocking, she told me the following story:

"Our good Mother was in Europe in the spring, as you know; and to me, though

all unworthy, was deputed the task of acting in her place. She never makes mistakes; I often do, being so impulsive, and not meek enough, owing to my impetuosity, for a true Little Sister of the Poor. But on this occasion I doubt if even her course would have been different from mine.

“One morning I was called to the visitors’ room to meet a stout, kind-looking Irish girl, who, with tears in her voice and on her cheeks, told me that if I went at once to a certain town about fifty miles from X——, I would find, in a dark, underground room of a fine dwelling-house, the mother of the owner, chained to an iron ring in the wall.

“‘But this can not be!’ I exclaimed. ‘I know something of these people. While the gentleman is a Catholic in name only, they are of some prominence in D——, and they could not be guilty of such a monstrous crime.’

“‘How many of them are guilty I can’t say,’ was the reply; ‘but the man himself is. I saw him going down there with a light, and that is how I found it out.’

“Questioning her, I learned that the

family had for a long time been unable to keep servants, because of a story having gone abroad that the house was haunted. Strange noises had been heard from time to time. The master and mistress grew angry when the rumors were spoken of; and the coachman, who had been in the family many years, said that, owing to some peculiar construction of the cellar, the wind passing through the ventilators was the source of these strange noises.

"Our Bridget was both brave and curious. One night, having occasion to go into the storeroom, she heard something like a moan from the cellar beneath; her next move was to take measures to learn the cause. Keeping her own counsel, she took a candle and went downstairs. Having located the place, she found under the storeroom what seemed to be a large closet, partitioned off from the coal cellar. It was locked, and resisted all her efforts to open it. Finally, after returning upstairs, she went around to the other side of the house, and marked, from without, what she supposed to be the ventilators corresponding to the locality of the closet.

" 'Had you any suspicions?' I asked.

“‘I had, Sister,’ she replied. ‘Twice of a night I saw the master going down the outside way, with a candle in his hand, and something that looked like a dish. I was at the window, in the dark, saying my prayers. Both mornings after I missed some potatoes and corn-bread that I left in the safe the night before. It wasn’t the first time I heard moaning and groaning; and I suspicioned that maybe he had some poor idiot of a brother or other relation down there that he was loath to put into an asylum. At any rate, I had no notion of meddling with what was none of my business, till the night I told you of. I thought I’d stay my month out, and then leave. I didn’t like the people overmuch, any way.’

“‘The next morning,’ she continued, ‘I was up with the day, and went straight to the little windows under the storeroom. I lit a couple of matches and peeped in. And, as sure as I’m a living creature, I saw an old woman with her hair streaming down her shoulders, walking up and down, up and down, and chains clanking after her as she went. She saw me too; for she slapped her hands together and looked at me like one in a terrible daze of fright.

I went upstairs again, got the breakfast, hurriedly washed the dishes, and packed up my clothes ready to go. The folks—man and wife and their two little daughters—went to town that morning; the coachman with them, of course. When they were well started I scoured the house for keys, and found about fifty. At the fortieth trial I opened the door, and I'll never tell you till you see it for yourself what I saw. Filth and rags and misery, and a nice darling old German woman chained to the wall—the damp, slimy wall. She couldn't understand me, nor I her; but I could just make out, "*Mutter, Mutter,*" and I made sure she was the master's poor old mother. I made signs to her that I'd try to help her out of that hole; and, after fastening her in again, I put on my bonnet, took my duds, and made straight for the town. I went to the priest—a kind German Father he is,—and told my story. At first he thought I was crazy; but pretty soon he believed me, and gave me this letter for you, Sister.'

“Here she produced a note from her pocket, and I read:

“Come at once to my house. FRIEDMAN.'”

“‘Will you come with me, Bridget?’ I asked.—‘I’d like nothing better, Sister,’ was her answer.

“‘We started as soon as possible, arriving at the house of the priest about sundown. He met us at the door. I found that he was convinced of the truth of Bridget’s story. Mr. Weisman had married a woman of doubtful reputation some years before, on whose account a man had been mysteriously murdered. Mr. Weisman, who lived alone with his mother, had been suspected, but never openly accused. He had made some lucky speculations and had suddenly become rich. But after his marriage, which she opposed to the best of her power, the old woman was missing. He gave out that she had returned to Germany; but a person living in the neighborhood, who had visited there, could find no trace of her. Then it came to be an accepted fact that he had placed her in some institution for the old and the infirm. It was well known that his wife had some mysterious power over him; and as she had never been able to endure the old woman’s presence in the house, Father Friedman supposed she had been instrumental in incarcerating her in

the dungeon where Bridget had discovered her.

“‘We must go slowly,’ said the priest, ‘or they may circumvent us. There is a Catholic family here with whom you may lodge for the night, and tomorrow—’ ‘Not an hour shall I wait, Father!’ I exclaimed, in my indignation. ‘I will beard the monster in his den at once.’—‘But you must be very careful,’ said the priest.—‘They will not dare touch me!’ I answered. ‘Mother or not, there is some poor creature concealed in that cellar; and I will brave the worst, taking the consequences.’ I felt like one inspired.

“‘In fifteen minutes,’” the Sister went on, “we were at the house. The family were at supper when we arrived. We entered the dining-room from the porch, unceremoniously; but my heart failed me when I saw the two children.

“‘A word with you, sir,’ I said. The man came out, closing the door. ‘What is it, Madam?’ he asked, courteously. Then, seeing Bridget, he looked disconcerted. ‘Sir,’ I said, ‘I have come for your poor old mother, whom you have kept chained in a dark cellar for so long a time.

'Take me to her, or I shall call the police.'"

"And now for the unforeseen part of my story. He neither quailed nor blanched before my righteous anger, much less did he deny the accusation. Opening the door, he called out to his wife: 'Laura, the Little Sisters of the Poor have come for the old woman. I told you long ago we should have sent her there.' Coolly putting his hand in his pocket, he produced a key, which he gave me. 'Irish!' he said, with a sneer, turning to Bridget. 'You are at the bottom of this. Go help the good Sister, and I wish you both joy of your bargain.' So saying he went back to the dining-room.

"We met the coachman in the yard. To my surprise he voluntarily offered to assist us. A rude-looking fellow, there was evidently some collusion between him and his master.

"I shall not sicken you with the recital of the horrors we saw when we went below. God only knows how the poor old woman had lived in that darksome, filthy hole so long. Yet she seemed strong, welcomed us effusively; and when the coachman finally broke the rusty chains, her joy and thanks were eloquent.

"I was at a loss how to remove her. I knew that a freight-train would pass in half an hour, and was anxious to get her on that if possible; as it would excite less remark, and the freight depot is just behind our house. But where to find something wherewith to cover her? 'I know!' said Bridget,—'if it would not be stealing.' Without waiting for an answer, she disappeared, returning with an old-fashioned but large and comfortable waterproof cloak that she had seen hanging in the bath-room. It was just what we needed. Wrapping it around her, the hood covering her hair which we had twisted into some semblance of a knot, we carried her up the stairs, in a half-unconscious state: the excitement and joy of her release now reacting upon her poor tired, macerated body. 'You have a carriage,' I said to the man. 'Get it ready and drive us to the station.'

"While we waited I bethought me that the poor creature might be hungry. 'When did you have any food?' I asked. 'Last night,' she replied, feebly. I went again to the dining-room. It was empty,—not a sound through the house; the

family had evidently taken themselves upstairs to await our departure. I buttered a piece of bread and poured some milk into a bowl. The old woman ate and drank eagerly.

“The carriage was soon ready. We were just in time for the train. The trainmen permitted me to lay the poor creature on a row of boxes in the car. The coachman put a ten-dollar gold piece in my hand. ‘Make her comfortable with it, Sister,’ he said. ‘I will get it out of the old man; he’s afraid of me. But it won’t do any good to make the thing public.’—‘Thanks!’ I said. ‘It is not my part to make the affair public. My concern is only with this poor victim of a son’s ingratitude and cruelty.’”

“Ah, Sister, what a story!” I said. “Truth is indeed far stranger than fiction.”

“There is no doubt of it,” she continued. “I could tell you things—ah! well. It is not necessary you should know them. But to go on; for the half-hour bell is about to ring, and I must then hurry to ladle out my soup.

“Somehow or other we—Bridget and I—got her in. We took her to the wash-house, and you should have seen—no, no!

God forbid that you should ever witness what we saw! It is enough to say that we were obliged to burn every rag of clothing on her body, even the cloak in which we had wrapped her; to cut her matted hair close to her head, and to *soak* her in warm water before we could cleanse her from the dirt that encrusted her. There were sores, too, all over her, which made it extremely painful to the poor old creature; but she was so glad to be clean again that she scarcely minded the pain. She fairly revelled in the several baths in which we placed her. She is beyond comparison the most exquisitely clean old person we have ever had in the house. Fancy what those seven years must have been to her!"

"A woman of extraordinary physical and mental strength as well," I said, "to have survived such a martyrdom."

"Yes, indeed. Well, we soon learned her story. It was as the priest had said. She felt deeply the marriage of her son, and his wife, who knew this, gave him no peace night or day. Once the old woman overheard her telling him to kill the 'old Dutch thing. One blow on the head would

do it.' She had resolved to go away after this, but woke next morning to find herself in the cellar. She had probably been drugged in her sleep and carried there. From what I can gather I believe she was cognizant of some dark deeds of his, or theirs perhaps; and while he feared to kill her outright, he thought it safer to put her where she could not talk, as she might have done in any institution. But he should have known her better. She hardly blames him. It was the fault of his wife, she says. Apart from a little wildness, he had been a good son to her always—until his marriage. Now you know why the poor old creature is constantly sitting in the sunshine: she cannot get enough of it.

“Once I said to her: ‘Frau Weisman, what did you do all the time you were in that dreadful place?’—‘I prayed,’ she replied, almost fiercely; ‘*I prayed, I prayed, I prayed!*’ It was her only resource and her salvation.”

“And she does not blame her inhuman son?” I asked.

“She will not speak of him. I think she tries to divert her thoughts from the mem-

ory of his atrocious conduct. Of course we respect her silence, and never mention the past."

The bell rang, and Sister Emilia hurried away to feed her "children," as the nuns call their charges. As I passed the chapel, the poor old woman was just leaving the sunny steps to go to the dining-room. She smiled pleasantly but sadly, responding to my salute. Delicately-featured, gentle, sweet-looking, she was a mother of whom any man might have been proud. Ah, Life, I thought, what horrors you conceal!

I soon became familiar with Frau Weisman, and we spent many quiet half-hours together in the sunny yard. I did all the talking that was done: she had little to say. Once, as I passed her favorite seat on the chapel steps, accompanied by one of my children—a little boy,—she bent forward and kissed the child's hand; tears, reminiscent I knew they were, gathering in her soft brown eyes.

Returning in the autumn days from a summer by the sea, I missed and inquired for her.

"She has gone," said Sister Emilia.

"Gone where?" I asked, surprised.

“To heaven as surely as mortal ever went there,” she replied.

“And her son—did you let him know?”

“Oh, no! She did not name or ask for him. She passed away without pain or illness; she was only tired, tired and sleepy. After the priest had left her for the last time I said: ‘You bear no ill-will to any one, Frau Weisman?’ She looked at me long and earnestly; and yet the look was introspective, as though searching her own soul. Reaching for my hand at last, she pressed it hard, almost to painfulness. ‘No,’ she said; ‘I forgive all—every one. It was the woman’s fault, and she knew nothing of God. She had led a sinful life, no one had ever taught her better. Ah, yes, I forgive all—every one!’

“I think these were her last connected words. After her death our good Mother thought it might be well for me to write to the son. She had never seen him, you know. I endeavored to dissuade her,—I *had* seen him. Nevertheless, I wrote. This was his answer:

“‘Did I send the old woman to you? Did I ask you to come for her? Now that she is dead you write, thinking no doubt

I will send you money. Not one cent.' ”

“ And where does this monster live? ”

I asked, filled with indignation.

“ Not fifty miles from here, ” was the reply. “ No doubt you have heard of him. I have seen and known of many unnatural children in my time, but never of one so hardened and ungrateful. He still lives, but death will come, and then—ah, let us pray for him, my dear! That will be best. ”

.
There is a little sequel to my narrative. Some years later the Sisters received from the town above mentioned a package containing ten one-hundred dollar bills. Within the envelope was a slip of paper with the words: “ Pray for a dying sinner. ”

The next week the newspapers announced the death of the son of our poor old Frau Weisman, who was buried with the highest Masonic honors. This fact convinced them of what they had suspected: that the money came from the ungrateful son, stricken with remorse in what must have been his terrible dying hours.

II.

GRANDMOTHER O'HALLORAN'S STORY.

For some time I had been attracted by a new face—the sweet, grave face of an old woman, framed in a carefully “goffered” cap of dazzling whiteness, such as we sometimes see in pictures of the Irish peasantry. Unlike most of her companions—who, strange to say, wear, as a rule, in summer and winter, hoods and blanket shawls, indoors as well as out,—she wore a shoulder shawl of fine material in a gray and white pattern. This, as well as the blue gingham apron which covered her faded black gown, was always spotlessly clean. The somewhat stern expression of her serious face, seamed with many wrinkles, was altogether redeemed by the bright smile which occasionally parted her lips at some witty sally of one of her more humorous companions. At such times I noticed the remarkable evenness and whiteness of her teeth (she appeared to be sixty-five or thereabouts);

and when she smiled, a dimple actually came to life and light in her withered old cheek. Always sitting a little apart from the various groups in the work-room or garden, her demeanor was characterized by a dignity and gentleness which, in spite of her aloofness, commanded the respect of her companions, not always granted to those who, from natural reserve or some other cause, prefer solitude to society.

One day—I had never got beyond a slight salutation with her—I remarked to the Sister in charge:

"It seems rather difficult to get acquainted with yonder old lady, and yet there is something so attractive and wholesome about her that I would be glad to break the ice of her reserve."

"She does not care to answer idly curious questions," was the reply; "being different in that respect from many old women. But she has a fine character, and has suffered much. Her confidence must be won gradually. Come, we will go to her."

Crossing the yard to where she sat knitting in the doorway of a little summer-house, the Sister said:

"Grandmother, this is a lady who is

much interested in you, but finds it hard to become better acquainted. She is a good friend of ours, and I will leave her with you now to be entertained while I go to the laundry."

She arose, bowed gravely as one knowing the requirements of courtesy; then, smiling sweetly, made room on the bench beside her, as she answered:

"Never fear, Sister: I'll strive to help her pass the time while you're gone. Will you sit down, my dear?"

Sister Gertrude hurried off, and I seated myself at the bidding of my new friend.

"What is your name, grandmother?" I asked. "I think I would rather call you by it, if you do not mind."

She lifted her eyes from her knitting with one of those pleasing smiles. "'Tis long since I heard it," she said. "They all call me 'grandmother,' and I'm used to it by this. My name is O'Halloran—Mary O'Halloran."

"A good name that," I said.

"You're not far astray, dear," she replied. "All that I knew of them were a good stock—man, woman, and child. You are not Irish yourself?"

"By descent, yes," I answered. "But I have never seen Ireland. I hope I may some day."

"I'd give the sight of my eyes for one look of the green hills, though it's thirty years since I sailed away from them," she exclaimed passionately, clasping her withered hands together.

The tears came to my eyes. Alas, poor wanderer! I thought. You are the type and embodiment of hundreds of years of exile and persecution, with soul still pure, and faithful heart still on fire with the memory of your native land.

Noticing my emotion, she placed her hand in mine. "It's a kind heart ye have with ye," she said; and the compact of our friendship was sealed from that hour. So it came to pass that on the rare occasions when the old woman availed herself of permission to go out, she sometimes spent the day with me; it happened once on St. Patrick's Day, and her old heart was full of memories, when she told me her pathetic story.

"I'm from Leitrim, joinin' Roscommon," she said; "the youngest and the only girl in a family of fourteen. Thirteen brothers

I had, and my father was well to do, as things were in those days. 'Twas spoiled and humored I was from the day I was born. Never a foot would I go to school, and I wasn't made do it. The boys wouldn't let my father or mother lay a hand on me. Sure I was the greatest tomboy of them all. I could climb a stone wall like a cat, and the hedges and ditches were nothin' at all to me. Two of my brothers were stonemasons, and they went to England; for the times were better there than at home. Four of them were settled on farms and married; three came to America in the bad year, and three went for sailors. The one next to me had a great fancy for bein' a priest—in those days there were 'poor scholars,' as they called them,—but he died before he could make a trial of it. God rest his soul! He was a good and a purty boy."

"How long ago was that?" I asked.

"Faith, I can't tell ye," she replied. "I was sixteen when I married, forty years I lived with my husband, twenty years next Michaelmas he's dead."

"Then you are seventy-six?"

"About that, my dear. It's a long life to look back on. Well, I had no thought of marriage, no more than that baby of yours, when my father came to me one day, and said he: 'Mary, put on ye as if you were goin' to Mass. Pat O'Halloran from the next townland,—ye mind him, don't ye? He was at Barney's funeral. Well, he's lookin' for a dacent girl for a wife, and I'm thinkin' you'll suit him.' I did as he bade me,—that's the way marriages were made in those days in Ireland, however they do it now. And I'm thinkin', by some of the specimens I see, it would be better if they'd make them the same way still."

"And you did not know the man?"

"Never laid eyes on him but once before, and never spoke a word to him till that evenin'."

"And you married him?"

"To be sure, after they settled about the fortune and called the bans."

"Was he young, like yourself?"

The old woman laughed. "Like myself, *alanna*? No, not at all. What call would a boy of sixteen have to be married? He was thirty years old, and a fine figure

of a man, strong as an ox, and handsome, with hair like the crow's wing. Some called him wilful and wild, but he was a good husband to me. We had ten acres of land, two cows, and a lot of pigs and chickens; a fine stone house of three rooms, and a barn nearly as good."

"And you were happy?"

"Indeed I was. Marriage sobered me at once; for the children came fast, and I had plenty to do. Seven boys of them in ten years, and then a fine, hearty girl. Maggie we called her, after his mother. Her father idolized her, and the brothers were the same way with her as mine with me. My poor father and mother died in the same year, when Maggie was five years old. That was our first trouble, and it was a good while before we had another."

She paused, musingly, her knitting dropped as she gazed into the fire.

"Often, when I do be sittin' alone in the evenings—not so much now as when I had my own little room with the open fire,—I look and search the coals for a picture I always find there."

"What is it, grandmother?"

"A big fireplace, with the peat piled

high at the side, and a couple of good sods burnin'; the big pot over the coals, and the potatoes bubblin' and boilin' inside; the little ones playin' about the floor; and Maggie tuggin' at my skirts, bawlin' for supper. Then I'd put the big noggin of fresh buttermilk on the deal table, as white as snow. The noggin itself was brass-bound and shinin' as soap and stone could make it. So were the small drinkin' noggins. I kept my little place clean and tidy. Soon the boys would come troopin' in, their father after them. I'd rise and take up the potatoes—that big platter above is about the size of the one they were piled on, their sides burstin'. Dear, there was never a meal so sweet as potatoes and buttermilk."

Drawing herself together, as it were, with a short, sharp sigh, she said, quickly: "Ah, I mustn't think of those days now! They're too far away." Wiping her eyes she continued:

"When Maggie was ten the crops failed, and the next year, and the next. Three of the boys came to America, and two went to Australia; two enlisted, and we had only the little girl. The boys in Australia

were young. I'm afraid they got wild; for we heard from them but seldom, and they never sent home but a trifle. It wasn't long till they stopped writin' altogether, and from that day to this we never heard tale nor tidings of them. Two of the boys in America married, and that stopped them from sendin' much home. And the old man got a hurt that withered his right hand, so he made but poor shift with the farm. Times went from bad to worse. The fever came, and all my brothers died of it. Their families were mostly as bad off as ourselves.

“At long last we could see no help for it, but Maggie must go to America too. The boy that was unmarried kept writin' for her, and wanted us all to come. But Maggie was such a kind, tender-hearted creature that she offered to go first, and make some kind of a way for us to get on. It was a sore thing for us to let her go: her father was never the better of it. She got a good place at once, and kept it a long time. All she could spare she sent us. The two married boys were livin' on a small place near the town, keepin' a dairy. But their two wives were always quarrelin',

and the men took to drinkin' on account of it. Maggie wrote that they seemed to have lost all nature for her; and the women wouldn't treat her well at all. So she seldom went next or near them.

"Dennis, the single boy, had strained his back liftin' a heavy barrel, and was most of the time in hospital. That was the cause of his not sendin' more money, but he didn't like to fret us by tellin' it. Every cent Maggie could spare she gave us, but the brother took the most of it; he could work only a spell at a time. 'Twas worse and worse things got every day, till it looked at last as if there was nothin' for us but the poorhouse. The parish priest wrote to the married boys; and, unbeknownest to their wives, they sent half our passage money; Maggie gave the rest.

"The very day we landed in C—— the two boys were killed by a tree fallin' on them—that was our welcome to America. I never saw either of their wives or one of the children since the day of the funeral. Maggie had a couple of nice rooms ready for us, but we found Dennis on the broad of his back in one of them. Poor boy!

he'd have been a good son, but sure he wasn't able."

"You must have been sorely discouraged," I said, looking down at the knotted, toil-worn hands lying at rest in her lap—the knitting had fallen on the floor.

"I was, *alanna*; but the prayer my mother taught me was ever on my lips: 'God's holy will be done.'"

"And you did not murmur?"

"Father in heaven, when I go before Your mighty throne I hope I can say No!" she exclaimed, reverently clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to a picture of the Sacred Heart which hung above the mantel. Moistening her dry lips with a taste of water, she continued:

"The worst was to come, dear; the worst was to come. The old man sickened too, in the hot air of the town; he had been so used to the hills and the fresh breath of heaven. I got a bit of washin' to do in the house where Maggie lived, and the lady was very kind. We were in it but six weeks when the cholera broke out dreadfully. Maggie came home to us one night, white as a ghost. When she fell on the floor in a heap I knew it was the

cholera. The old man ran for the doctor. He came at once, and told us send for the priest, for she wouldn't be alive in the mornin'. Her father threw up his hands at that, and ran like a crazy man into the next room. I ran for the priest. The Jesuits were on the next block, and I had been with her to see Father Kenny, her confessor, the Sunday before. He was with me in a flash. We worked hard to keep her—the Father, the doctor and myself—until midnight. All the neighbors but one woman were afraid to come in. It was the first case in the buildin'. After she went there was many a one carried out feet foremost. Her own father wouldn't come near her. She died just as the bells were ringin' for five o'clock Mass; and Father Kenny—God bless him!—went back to say it for her; though he told me he knew she didn't need it, she was such a good child, and a member of the Sodality. He said she'd worked too hard, and had no strength when the disease took hold of her."

Clasping her hands nervously in front of her, the poor creature began to rock to and fro, her lips twitching, tears falling on the wrinkled fingers.

“Do not tell me any more, Mrs. O'Halloran,” I said, putting my arm around the poor bent shoulders. “It must distress you so.”

“No, darlin', it doesn't,” she answered, stifling a sob. “My old heart is cold, cold, and it does me good to talk. Ah! it's many a day since I opened it before.”

“Well, the world isn't so bad, after all. Dennis lay in the room beyant, strivin' to comfort his father; the poor boy couldn't do a hand's turn besides. I went my lone to the undertaker; and he treated me well, tellin' me not to be uneasy about the money. 'Twas a great drunkard he was, and he died of the cholera before the summer was over; but God remembered that for him when he was goin'.

“'Twas the hottest day I ever felt when we buried my girl. The old man was shakin' and tremblin' so that I couldn't hold him up. And when the first sod fell on her, he gave a loud cry and his heart broke. Yes, dear, it did—he took to his bed when we went back, and was buried that day fortnight.

“Dennis was somethin' better when the father died,” continued grandmother;

"and by dint of drivin' carriages for the undertaker—for men were scarce—we soon had the most of the bill paid. There was a trifle comin' to Maggie besides, and her former mistress was very good to me. She got me washin' here and there; and, though strange to the country's ways, I was a fine hand at the washin' and ironin'."

"It was your beautifully laundered cap that first made me notice you," I said, touching the fluted ruffle as I spoke.

"I brought the goffer-irons from Ireland with me that did this very cap," she answered, with a smile; "and through thick and thin I've always managed to have a clean one. From this one I got a present of a bit of linen, and from that one a scrap of lawn, so I'm never without a good half dozen of them.

"It was terrible that summer. Hundreds of people died with the cholera. The neighbors soon found that I wasn't afraid of it, and it was Mrs. O'Halloran here, there, and everywhere. Many's the night, after a day's hard work, I sat rubbin', rubbin', and puttin' on mustard plasters. Many's the corpse I laid out for the grave. The priests were all in it. When father and

mother deserted their children, the priest of God was still to the fore.

“About the beginnin’ of fall, when it was growin’ cooler, and the sickness not quite so bad, Mr. Heany, the undertaker, was stricken. His wife ran screamin’ home to her mother, and there was no one to tend him but his son by the first wife. I went over when I heard it. Father Kenny was there before me. I never saw one suffer like Mr. Heany. He was a giant ye might say, tall and broad; after he’d been sick three hours you could lay the skin in folds on any part of his body, he was so wasted. He died holdin’ my hand, and made the son promise he’d forgive us the rest of the debt.

“By this time the neighbors had come to know me well. They were very good and kind, and often sent in the children with a pail of water or a handful of kindlin’, to save my feet; for Dennis was soon on his back again, and I had all I could do to keep our bodies and souls together.

“It was only in the long winter evenings, over my knittin’, I began to feel all that had happened me. The shock was so dreadful that it numbed me like; and the

summer so full of sickness and death, I had not time to think. But I thanked God that my two boys had made their Easter duty a few days before they were killed; that I had seen Maggie once more; and that her father was buried beside her, where he could rest easy. And when I'd be lookin' at poor Dennis, lyin' pale and weak on the bed forninst me, I'd be sayin' another prayer of thankfulness that he wasn't carousin' and drinkin', like so many more in the parish. But sometimes I'd feel very lonely, and my heart would tighten within me till I'd think it burstin'. I never found a cure for that, dear, but to put on my hood and mantle and run round to St. Ignatius', to the foot of our Blessed Lady's altar. I could see the spire of the church—yes, the back of the high altar—from my kitchen window; and when the Angelus rang, it seemed at the very doorstep.

“We held our own through the winter; and Dennis was feelin' so much better he thought he'd look around for a job. He came in one mornin' about nine—he'd been out since seven,—and said: ‘Mother, they're beginnin' to tear down a part of the old

church today, to make way for the new. I'm thinkin', as I've nothin' to do, I'll lend them a hand by way of kindness, for today anyway. Father Kenny and all the Fathers have been so good it's the least I might do, though I'm not strong enough to keep at it long.'—'Do, child,' says I, nothin' loath, and pleased at the good heart of the boy. So he went from me, the last that was left; and they brought him back to me in an hour's time, killed by a falling wall, so crushed and broken that they wouldn't let me look at him. But I'll always see him as he looked back at me that March mornin' leavin' the threshold,—my poor, pale-faced boy!"

"Oh, don't tell any more!" I said, my face wet with tears. "It is too terrible for you."

"There's not much more to tell, *asthore*. That was the end of livin' and lovin' for me in this world. I worked on and on. Sure my boy was a martyr, and the heavens opened for him that day; that comforted me. The Fathers were good to me, and paid my rent. I toiled on and on, till the rheumatism got hold of me; and I wasn't much good after that. When I couldn't

do the heavy washings any longer, I cleaned offices now and then; and knitted socks for the laborin' men. I had a little peanut stand on the corner for a while, but it didn't prosper with me; the neighbors told me I gave the children too much for a penny. Once I hired out as a nurse to a baby for a dollar a week and my meals, goin' home to my own little room at night. I liked that well till the lady got drunk one day, and beat me with a poker because I wouldn't give the baby a sup of beer."

"It was well for you, grandmother," I said, "that you did not contract the habit of drinking to drown your troubles. Many a poor soul has been wrecked by it."

"A drop of liquor was never drunk in my father's house nor in mine," she replied. "I hate the smell and I don't know the taste of it. I saw enough of it among the poor creatures in the court where I lived so long—twenty years. It was a purgatory for me."

"How long have you been with the Little Sisters?" I asked, as she relapsed into silence.

"Two years, *alanna*,—two years this comin' Good-Friday."

“And you are happy here?”

“How could I help it? It was hard to give up my little place; but I was growin' a burthen to the neighbors, and I knew it was best. Some of these old women are very gabby, and I do be tired listenin' to them; so I keep to myself all I can, without wantin' to seem cross or cranky. That's only on weekdays; Sundays I try to be merry with the best of them.”

“And you are happy at last, in the evening of your days?”

“Yes, dear, very happy. I have all I want to eat and drink, and never an ache or a pain. Our Lord is there in the chapel, and I can go to Him whenever I please. Mass every mornin' and Holy Communion once a week,—what would I ask more?”

Again she was silent. But I caught a rapid, yearning look, with which she seemed to search my countenance; and felt there was something she wished, yet hesitated, to say.

“What is it, grandmother?” I inquired.

She murmured a few words under her breath, then shook her head. “No,” she said, “not yet. It's a little matter I'm not

certain about, between me and my conscience. No sin, I can say truly; but some one ought to know it, and I'd like to tell you of it,—I think I might." She rose to her feet, and added quickly. "No, no, not today. I'll sleep on it anyway, and maybe the next time you come I'll take counsel with you. But the evenin' is darkenin', and I must be away before the gate is shut. Thank you, dear, for the happiest St. Patrick's Day I've spent in America."

So saying she hurried away.

The next time I went to the Little Sisters, they told me Grandmother O'Halloran was ill, had been in bed some days. I asked permission to visit her, and was ushered into the infirmary. She was very glad to see me, and said she had been thinking of asking the Sisters to send for me; as she had a little errand which no one else could do, and also something to tell me. Having expressed my willingness to do all in my power, she beckoned me nearer, and said, in a low voice:

"They tell me it's nothin', *alanna*, but I'm goin' to die. I'm wastin' away, that is all: there's no sickness upon me. But

there's somethin' on my mind, as I told you before."

"If you will tell me what it is, perhaps I may be of service," I replied.

"When I came here," she said, "I had twenty-five dollars in my pocket. Fifteen of that I gave to the Sisters, and hid the other ten in a little bag in the ball of my hair. Not a soul knew it. It has bothered me a good deal lately; for I didn't feel it was just right to keep it from them that had been so good to me. But I wanted it partly for a habit—a habit of the Scapular,—and partly because I didn't know but sometime I might have to leave this, and then I'd be without a penny. I have often had a quarter or half a dollar from visitors, but I've given every cent of that to the Sisters. Only one day last winter a lady came here; she was wealthy, for she gave the old women new hoods and blankets, and the Sisters a hundred dollars. And she slipped a five-dollar bill into my hand at the chapel door. 'Pray for me, mother,' she said, in a whisper. 'And keep this for yourself,—for *yourself, mind!*' I took it and put it with the rest. Now, lyin' here these few last days I've been takin' great

shame to myself for it all; and I'm longin' to give up the money, only there's two things holdin' me back. They promised to bury me beside Pat, close to Maggie and Dennis; but I want a habit, my dear, and five Masses to be said for my soul. So I'm loath to give up the money."

She looked at me wistfully, as though she would read my thoughts.

"Give it to the Sisters, grandmother," I said. "They have been so kind to you, and have so trusted you, that they would feel it deeply, I am sure, if they thought you had secreted it. For my part, I promise to get you the habit at once, so that you may see it; and the Masses will be said."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, darlin'!" she answered, seizing my hand and clasping it warmly between hers.

I sat down beside her. She took off her cap, and from the still abundant coil of her snowy hair drew a tiny linen bag. Untying the string, she laid the contents in my hand. I counted fifteen dollars.

"I'm greatly better in my mind now, darlin'," she said, tying her cap strings once more; "but my body's very, very weak. I'll not be long here."

I endeavored to make her believe she would soon be well again; but she clung to the idea of death, and bade me hasten with the habit.

On the next day but one I brought it, and the fashion pleased her well. It was made of soft brown cashmere, and the Sister told me she had taken a bath that morning and changed all her underclothing for a fine, lace-trimmed set some lady had given her years ago, and which she had never worn, preferring to save it for her burial. She desired us to put it on her at once, for she was feeling very weak. After this she seemed satisfied, and lay quietly with her beads on the coverlid near her. When the Sister had gone away she whispered, her voice grown very weak:

“I gave the money to the good Mother, and told her all about it, asking her pardon. She wasn't a bit vexed with me, but went and got a big orange and made me eat it. Father Bryan gave me the last Sacraments this mornin'; he's away in the country for the balance of the week, and I'll not be here when he comes again. And, O darlin', I'll never forget you or yours where I'm goin' !”

I left her soon after, promising to return on the morrow. When I reached the Home next day she had been dead some hours, and lay with a touch of the beauty of her youth upon her peaceful face. We buried her in the quiet spot where she had wished to lie, "beside Pat, close to Dennis and Maggie,"—the rest of her loved ones, or mayhap their graves, scattered hither and thither through the world.



III.

LIZZIE'S FATHER.

He was one of five old blind men at the Little Sisters, and by far the most interesting of the company. His face always reminded me of the pictures of the Curé of Ars: it had the same outlines, and must always have been spiritual-looking. Indeed, he confided to me that from his boyhood he had wished to become a religious; but, having been the only son in a large family, he felt it his duty to remain with his old father and mother, and take the burthen of the farm off their shoulders. This had been in Ireland, many years ago, where he had subsequently married, emigrating to this country after the death of his parents. His wife had died early, leaving him the poor man's heritage—a family of daughters.

He was refined and intelligent, and had kept his girls at school as long as he could, hoping to fit them for some position

above that of service. But as each grew to womanhood, ill health set in; and they faded away one by one, till Lizzie, the youngest and apparently the most frail, was the only one left. Up to this time he had occupied the position of watchman in a large manufactory, and had managed to live comfortably. But sickness and the consequent draw on his purse had taken all his small savings; and the death of his second last daughter found him not only almost penniless, but threatened with blindness.

Lizzie was at this time hardly twenty-five years of age, a frail, sweet-faced girl, unable, one would think, to battle with the world. She was engaged to a young man having a good clerkship in the house where her father was employed. The old man was fond of him, and treated him in all things as a son.

"Indeed," he said, in his own calm yet pathetic way, "it would not have hurt me worse had my own son proved ungrateful. It all came at once. Mr. Watson, my employer, informed me one Saturday evening that the firm had resolved to hire another man in my place. He was sorry,

but my increasing blindness rendered it impossible for me to remain in such a responsible position. And I agreed with him, though it was a hard blow. He was very kind, giving me five hundred dollars, and telling me never to allow myself to want while he lived. I learned afterward that the physicians had told him my loss of sight was the result of an organic disease, which might take me off at any moment. That was ten years ago, and—thanks be to God!—I am still living at seventy-five. So much for the doctors.

“Lizzie took it all cheerfully, saying that she had long wished for a change of some kind for me; and bade me not worry, for she and John would take care of me.

“He came the next evening; and as their marriage day was near at hand, and I never liked to be a spy or a damper on the young folks, I went into the adjoining room after a few words, and sat down to my paper. I'll pledge you my word, ma'am, I didn't know I had left the door on the crack till I heard him begin to talk; but I'll not deny that when I learned the tone the young man was taking I made no haste to shut it.

"'Lizzie,' he began, 'this is very sad about your father; just as we were about to be married, too.'

"'Yes,' said Lizzie, 'it is. But the worst part is that he is threatened with blindness; it will be so hard for my poor father! But the firm have made him a present of five hundred dollars, which was certainly very kind.'

"'What is five hundred dollars!' he answered. 'You can't get more than thirty dollars at interest, and that would hardly keep him in tobacco.'

"'True,' said Lizzie. 'But it will be a little nest-egg for him, and he will not feel so dependent on us.'

"He said nothing for a minute, but hemmed and hawed till I think he must have been red in the face. At last he succeeded in bringing it out.

"'I've been thinking for some time, Lizzie,' he resumed, 'especially since this blindness has been coming on the old man, that we ought to come to some understanding about him.'

"'What do you mean, John?' asked Lizzie, turning on him sharply, I knew by the tone of her voice.

“‘Why, don't you think we ought to try and persuade him to go to the Little Sisters? An old man like that gets to be a great burden after a while, and—’

“‘There is the door, sir!’ said Lizzie—I could hear her get up from the chair and stand on the floor. ‘There is the door, sir, I repeat! Open it, if you please; shut it after you, and never enter it again!’

“‘But, Lizzie,’ he answered—he was very much astonished, I'll be bound,—‘be reasonable.’

“‘Go!’ was all she said. And he went.

“She lingered a while in the room after he had gone, then I heard her blow out the lamp and come in where I was. She stood beside me a moment or two, and put her hand on my hair.

“‘I love this dear white head,’ she said, ‘and these failing eyes better than anything in the world.’ Then she kissed my hair and eyes and cheeks and lips, tears streaming down her face. ‘Father—’ she began; but I wanted to spare her.

“‘My daughter,’ said I, ‘you need tell me nothing: I heard every word. And you need not grieve for such a man; for he could not have been a good husband.’

" 'I don't think I shall fret at all,' she said. 'I'm too thankful to God for opening my eyes before it was too late.'

" We said little about him from that day to this. He married a silly slip of a girl shortly after.

" Well, it was hard times for us then. Lizzie tried sewing, but it made her side ache; fancy work paid but little, and the machine she could not stand. My poor girl even took in gentlemen's washing to keep soul and body together. Little by little we were spending the bit of money. Lizzie was getting very thin and pale, and at last we saw there was nothing for us but that she should go out to service in some easy place. That meant here for me, of course. But we both were reconciled to it when we saw it had to be done; and she was fortunate in getting a place with an invalid lady as a sort of companion and waiting-maid. She has fifteen dollars a month, and comes to see me every Thursday. Sister Emilia will tell you she is a lovely child. She never comes without bringing fruit and tobacco, — not a taste, but enough to share a bit; and there's never a week but she drops a silver half-dollar

into St. Joseph's box in the corridor. She brings me handkerchiefs and stockings, and makes my shirts,—I have plenty of other clothes."

"I shall be anxious to see Lizzie, after all I have heard of her," I said.

My wish was soon gratified. A fortnight later, as I was going into the men's department, I met the blind man coming out, leaning on Lizzie's arm. She had a lovely face; it would have been a study for a painter. She was speaking to her father in a low, sweet voice.

"This is Lizzie I know," I said, holding out my hand. Then and there we formed an acquaintance which only ended with Lizzie's life.

She was indeed a model daughter: gentle, tender, affectionate, anticipating every wish and thought of her beloved father; while he, in turn, cherished her with an almost adoring fondness. He would make her take off her bonnet, so that he might pass his hands over her hair, which was beautiful and abundant. "It is as thick as ever," he would say; or, touching her cheek, "That little dimple is still here"; or, "Your hands are getting softer, my

dear. I'm so glad you do not have to work hard." Sometimes she would peel a couple of dozen oranges or apples, and pass them around among the old men; or sometimes it would be tobacco, in small squares for chewing, as they liked it best. It was a delight to watch her on Thursday afternoons, and I often availed myself of it.

One evening we were walking home together, her way lying not far from mine, when Lizzie told me that she had been troubled for some time with a slight but disagreeable cough, and that the doctor had told her she must be very careful of her lungs.

"For myself I do not care," she added: "I should have no regrets. But I cannot bear to think of dying and leaving my poor father behind. It would break his dear old heart. And again I feel as though I could not live if he were gone."

"You must take great precaution against colds," I said. "You are not strong, but with due care you will live a long while yet. And your father is not very feeble. You have been so good a daughter, and have so trusted in God that He will not desert you at the end."

She smiled and shook my hand at parting, neither of us thinking that we should meet no more on earth.

The weather changed next day. On Sunday, Lizzie went to Mass in a storm of snow and sleet; that night she was taken with pneumonia. The next morning her mistress had her sent to the hospital; she took cold in transit, and by Tuesday was delirious. Wednesday her senses returned; she sent for Sister Emilia, but did not know her when she arrived. She died on Thursday morning.

“Ah! come home with me,” said Sister Emilia, on her way from the death-bed; “and say something to that poor old man, —I cannot.”

I accompanied her on the sad errand.

“Where is Mr. Sullivan, Michael?” asked Sister Emilia, as we entered the smoking-room.

“Sure he was dhroopin’, Sister dear, and went to lie down a while ago. His girl didn’t come the day, and he was a bit low-spirited.”

We went to the infirmary. I know not what instinct told me the old man’s hour had come, but I felt it as soon as I looked

at him. A great change had taken place since the week before.

"Well, what's this?" said the Sister, in her cheery way. "You were as lively as a cricket when I went out this morning, and now you're in the dumps. What is it?—a headache?"

"No, Sister," he replied, more slowly than was his wont; "only a kind of weakness. I haven't been well since Sunday; but I said nothing, not wishing to give trouble. And I have missed my girl a bit this afternoon. 'Tis the first time she failed to come."

The knowledge that was in me rose to my lips, and I said: "Lizzie was obliged to go away suddenly for her Master, Mr. Sullivan. There is no need to tell you she is even more sorry than yourself. But next Thursday she will be with you without fail."

Sister Emilia shook her head deprecatingly, and opened her eyes, as if to say, "How dare you tell such a falsehood!"

"Thank you, thank you, ma'am, for bringing me the message," he answered. "From Thursday to Thursday is but a short time, to be sure; and how many

there are who have never a soul to think of them outside, much less come once a week to see them! I think I could sleep a bit, and I'm very grateful."

When we left the room I humbly accepted Sister Emilia's admonitions on the sin of falsehood; but after she had finished, I told her of my conviction that the old man was stricken with death.

"Maybe so," she replied; "but there is no appearance yet—to my eyes at least. You will have to extricate yourself as you got in, if you are mistaken."

The next morning we saw Lizzie laid in the cemetery; it was Monday before I went again to the Little Sisters.

"How is Mr. Sullivan?" I asked of one of his companions.

"Dying, they tell me, of the pneumonia. He hasn't a mite of sense left in him."

I was not at all surprised; but went directly to the old women's room, where I found Sister Emilia.

"You were right," she said: "the old man will never leave his bed alive. There will be no need to tell him of Lizzie; for he is lying in a stupor, out of which he will not be likely to pass."

I never saw him again. That night, about twelve, two of the Little Sisters were watching at his bedside,—Sister Emilia and a delicate little creature, who passed most of her time mending the clothes, not being able to do hard work. The old man began to articulate for the first time since Friday. The Sisters approached his bed.

"I am coming, Lord Jesus," he said, distinctly; "but I want Lizzie. Lizzie, give me your hand."

Sister Emilia slipped her hand in his. He pushed it away. "That is not Lizzie's hand," he said. "Daughter, give me your hand."

Sister Emilia made a sign to the little nun beside her. She clasped the wasted fingers.

"Ah, that's right!" he said. "Dear, soft, kind little hand!" And pressing it to his lips, so passed away.

IV.

OLD KITTY'S LEGACY.

She was one of a type fast passing away, since the Associated Charities have been the means of abolishing street-begging and indiscriminate almsgiving;—a ragged, repulsive-looking creature, with a shrewd eye, and a habitual expression of lip which was more leer than smile.

She always carried a basket, kept well filled with dainty remnants of food by the kind-hearted servant-girls in the aristocratic neighborhood she honored with her daily visitations. It was rumored that she sold most of these to her fellow-lodgers in the miserable tenement where she slept; for early morning saw her abroad in all weathers, and she was often met on her way home near midnight,—always carrying her basket.

Although living among the most degraded class, in a disreputable portion of the town, she had never been accused of

dishonesty or immorality of any kind; did not drink or swear, but was very coarse in her habits. Her stockingless feet were covered with thick, well-patched brogans, much too large for her. Her skirts, from long service, were in fringes of dirty rags. She wore a black shawl tied about her waist, and a heavy plaid one over it, winter and summer. She went to Mass every morning, remaining in the back part of the church, and often soliciting alms from those who passed out. I remember one morning reproving her for this somewhat sharply, and asking her why she did not go to the Little Sisters.

"Sure, you wouldn't begrudge a poor, lone woman her freedom, ma'am," she said. "What'd a rambler like me do in such a place? Lave me alone, and make your own sowl; and God grant yourself a dacent place for your old age."

On another occasion, meeting her on the street with her beads thrust ostentatiously before her, while she mumbled "Hail Marys" as she passed along, I told her I did not think it looked well to make such a public display of religion.

"There ye are agin!" she said. "Will

ye never lave me alone? Them that's higher and better knows how to judge us both. Plase to give me a dime, ma'am, for a taste of coal,"—which request I could not refuse, much as I disliked the poor creature's ways.

Since age and experience have taught me some wisdom, I have often thought I did her injustice. Not mentally bright, yet with some notions of piety and reverence for sacred things, she was not to be measured by a high standard. Two incidents favorable to her character I have always remembered.

Much against the protestations of the pastor of the church she frequented, she always presented him with a gold piece at Christmas. He, thinking it represented great privation on her part, declined at first to receive it; but she insisted. She made this gift regularly for many years.

Another good trait was evidenced by the fact that, though she was the recipient of all kinds of gossip from the people and places she frequented, she was never known to utter a syllable derogatory to another, had no intimates, and kept her own counsel. Though a daily attendant at Mass, and not

seldom assisting at three Masses on Sundays, no one ever saw her approach the Holy Table. She was, indeed, a typical character, and a bundle of eccentricities.

One morning I was greeted by Sister Emilia with an anxious countenance.

"I have been so vexed," she said. "And those things nearly always get into the papers. You know the woman they call Old Kitty,—the one who always carries a basket and says her Rosary aloud on the streets?"

"I know her well."

"Yesterday she came asking us to take her, as she felt her health to be failing. Our good Mother agreed to do so, and told her to come this morning. She came about nine o'clock; and we felt it incumbent upon us to make her take a bath, after which we intended to give her an entire change of clothing. (You know the necessity we often find for this plan.) But she would not agree to it; and finally, while I was endeavoring to remove her shawl, she broke away from me, rushed to a passing street car and called: 'Help! help! They are trying to steal my clothes in there.' One of the passengers so informed us,—

a middle-aged lady, who came in to make inquiries."

"How unfortunate!" I replied. "Such a pity that the old creature should have come! But I do not believe the papers will get hold of it."

However, they did get it, and exaggerated the affair so much that the Sisters were greatly distressed.

After that Kitty and I gave each other a wide berth. She was doubtless afraid I might reproach her; and, on my part, I did not wish to interrogate her. Indeed, she was out of favor among many of her old friends through the occurrence.

It might have been two years later, one day in the middle of winter, a Catholic physician who attended at the Little Sisters was summoned to the old woman. He found her dying on a heap of rags in her filthy abode. After telling her frankly that she had not more than twenty-four hours to live, he offered to send her two Sisters of Charity.

"No," she said, "I don't want them at all, but the Little Sisters. I have business with them. Come back yourself, and bring Father K——; and have the Little Sisters

here at four. I've enough to pay you for your trouble, and I'll not keep ye long."

The good man obeyed her wishes. Father K—— heard her confession; and, in response to a telephone message, Sister Emilia and a companion reached the place at four o'clock. The old woman greeted the Sisters with effusion.

"I'm bound for death," she said; "and I want to ax your pardon, Sisters, for the way I behaved that day long ago at the Home. They told me it was in all the newspapers, and it made a great scandal." Reaching her hand under the bedclothes she said: "Call up the man that keeps the saloon downstairs,—him and his wife."

This was done; and when they made their appearance, Kitty drew forth a leather bag from beneath the clothes. Untying the string that confined it, she took out a five-dollar gold piece, saying, "Here's to you, Tom Crane,—to you and your wife; you've always been good to me. And what I said about the Little Sisters was a lie."

She handed another to the doctor. "Take this for your trouble, sir. And what I said about the Little Sisters was a lie."

She next drew two double eagles from

the bag, with these words: "I beg your pardon, Father K——, for all the scandal I've given. Take the bit of money, give me a dacent funeral, and put the rest in your pocket. And don't lay me in the Potter's Field; for as sure as you do I'll walk."

Finally she presented the bag, to Sister Emilia, saying, "The rest is for you, Sister, and the good Mother, for the Home; for I was very bad to you, very bad. I call you all to witness that I'm doin' it of my own free will and intention. I never had husband or child. I've neither kith nor kin. I got the money honest, if some of it was begged; and it's my own to do what I plase wid. Now be off, all of ye, and let me die in peace."

She would not permit any one to remain in the room, and the group dispersed; though the kind woman—a jet-black negress—who had been her friend, lingered within call.

In a very little while she was dead. She got the "dacent funeral," and was not laid in Potter's Field, but in consecrated ground, in the lot of the Little Sisters. The bag contained \$250 in gold. Peace to her memory!

V.

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

In the Home of which I write there were many more women than men, and Irish was the predominating nationality. I do not know whether the former is the case everywhere, but am inclined to believe it is. Probably because of their more temperate lives, women, as a rule, after a certain age, live longer than men; particularly if their lot is one of privation. And it is a well-known fact that the Germans, French, Swiss, and other continental folk, are far more provident in general than those of Irish birth. Among them a man or woman must have led a life of great hardship, or dissipation and extravagance, or misfortune must have visited one sorely, when one has not laid by something for old age. Far be it from the intention of this chronicler to insinuate, however, that even the greater number of these poor Irish pensioners on public bounty and the

charity of the Little Sisters are destitute through their own fault. And such was not the case with my good old friend Mrs. Connell, the subject of this sketch.

After having lived alone for many years, with few acquaintances and no intimate friends, though greatly respected by the neighbors, her sight failed; and as her living had depended on the fine needle-work she did so well, she was obliged to seek a refuge among the Little Sisters. She was of great assistance to them in knitting the numerous pairs of stockings required by their large family; and for a long time occupied the position of portress, or lodge-keeper; so that really most of her working hours were passed in solitude, a privilege she appreciated. Always smiling and affable, there was, nevertheless, a look of deep sadness in her eyes, and about the gentle lips, never opened save in kindness and charity.

I forget how it came about that I learned her story. I remember, though, that she told me she had kept it from all the world, save her confessor, for more than thirty years. I wish I could tell it as she related it to me; but I can only give the facts,

more strange, as they are always in real life, than the wildest fiction.

"I was a girl of twenty," she said—"an orphan girl,—when I first met my husband. He was at least ten years older than I, but a lively, jolly fellow; while I never cared much for frolicking. But we were drawn together from the first, and were married after a courtship of a few months. My parents had come to this country when I was a little child, but John had not been in America more than five years when I married him. He was a carpenter, I a seamstress, and together we made a nice living; for, having no children, I had a good deal of spare time on my hands, and kept on sewing.

"Very soon we had our own little home, nicely furnished, with a garden full of flowers; for we were both very fond of them, and spent many an hour beautifying the place. There was not a happier woman in the world than I. My husband was kindness itself; I never saw a frown on his face, nor heard him sigh. If ever true love existed, it was between him and me.

"One day I was busy getting dinner,

when through the open door, for it was summer time, I saw a woman coming up the walk. I have never forgotten it,—I can never forget it. I can see the roses on their long stalks; I can smell the peppermint near the doorstep; I can feel the breath of the soft, sweet, summery air. The woman was perhaps fifty years old, shabbily and tawdrily dressed; her bonnet was falling off her head, her eyes were red and bloodshot, her face repulsive. By the time she reached the threshold I could tell that she had been drinking.

“‘Poor creature!’ I thought. ‘She wants a drink of water this warm day.’ She walked directly in without knocking, and said, abruptly:

“‘Is your name Mary Connell?’

“‘It is,’ I said. ‘What is your business with me?’

“‘And is John Connell, the man who calls himself your husband, a carpenter from the parish of X., Co. N., Ireland?’

“‘The man who *calls* himself my husband!’ I exclaimed. ‘John’—for as I spoke he stepped into the room.

“With an oath—the first I had ever heard him utter—he greeted the woman,

who had faced him as he came in; then, white as a sheet, he fell against the dresser.

"'He is *my* husband!' she shouted, with a drunken laugh. 'And he will not deny it,—he cannot: I have my marriage lines in my pocket.'

"I thought he was going to die, there came such a look of age, of horror into his face. I pushed him into a chair, though I could no more than stand myself.

"'Is she your wife, John?' I asked; and I did not know my own voice, it sounded so strange and husky.

"'God help me and forgive me, Mary, she is!' he answered, his head falling on his breast like one in a swoon.

"'Then this is not the place for me,' I said, taking off my apron and going into the next room. He followed me there, crying and asking me what I was going to do. I did not answer him, because my heart was beating so loud that I could not speak. And the remembrance of it all now seems like a dream.

"'I was only a boy, Mary,' he said; 'and she was years older than I. I hated her, but she and her brothers ensnared me the only time I was ever drunk. And

I believed her dead, Mary,'—oh, I did! Can you think I would have done you such a wrong, my darling, that I love better than my life?'

“‘You ought to have made sure,’ I answered at last, my heart beginning to grow hard and cold.

“He rushed from the room, and I heard their angry voices outside, while I got together a few little things in a small satchel. I had fifty dollars in a purse in the drawer, my own savings. I put this in my pocket, and stole out softly through the hall. I wanted to catch the one o'clock Western Express. I was lucky enough to be in time; and I came to this city, hundreds of miles from my happy New England home. Thirty years have passed, and now it is near the end.”

“And you have heard nothing of him in all that time?”

“Yes: there were advertisements in the *Pilot*, but I took no notice of them. Of what use? She was his wife; and, as I said that day, that house was no place for me.”

“And you have felt bitterly toward him?”

"No, thank God. I believe he told me the truth. The only bitterness was that he did not tell me the story before I married him. It was my cross. God ordained it, and I have striven to be content."

"Have you never met any of your former friends?"

"Strangely enough, never. I used to fear it at first; but I aged rapidly: my hair got white, and my name is too common a one to excite any suspicion."

"Was it at first that those advertisements appeared in the *Pilot*, or of late years?" I asked.

"In the beginning, and at intervals long after. I had not seen any for a good while before I came here."

"Did it never occur to you that the other woman might have died?"

She looked at me in surprise. "I never thought of that," she said; "never, never, until this moment."

"Surely if he were living, and wanted you to return, you would marry him again?"

"I would!—oh, yes, I would!" she answered, passionately. "He is as deep in this old heart today as he was the day I left him."

Though I said little, I thought: "Poor, faithful heart; dear, patient heart! If I can bring you help, it shall be done."

I went to Sister Emilia and told her the story. She entered with avidity into my plan, which was nothing more or less than the insertion of an advertisement in the *Pilot*, asking for information of John Connell, formerly of —, Mass., who, if living, was requested to come, if possible, to the Convent of the Little Sisters in X.

Weeks passed; we heard nothing. But one bright June morning a messenger came to tell me I was wanted immediately at the Little Sisters. I hastened to obey the summons; and found, instead of the lodge-keeper, Sister Emilia waiting for me in the little room.

"It is well you are come," she said, smiling. "Now haste away to the wedding."

"What wedding,—whose?" I asked, in astonishment.

"Mrs. Connell's," was the reply. "Her husband came last night, all the way from Vermont; and they are only waiting for you to be bridesmaid. The carriage is at the door, the old couple in the parlor.

Come at once and be introduced to the bridegroom, who wishes to thank you for his happiness."

We found them sitting on the old horse-hair sofa, hand clasped in hand. He was a tall, fine-looking man of perhaps seventy. She sat beside him, shy as a girl with her first lover, a bright rose spot on either cheek.

Thanks, congratulations, and exclamations were in order. (I shall spare the reader.) And after the bride-to-be had taken an affectionate leave of the Little Sisters, and the prospective bridegroom had presented a substantial token of gratitude, we three entered the carriage, and in half an hour I had the pleasure of assisting at one of the happiest wedding ceremonies it has ever been my good fortune to witness.

After it was over they took an early train for the East, and I returned home, marvelling at the strange ruling of earthly events, and the inscrutable ways of Providence. I afterward learned that the woman who had broken up the peaceful home lived only a few months after she had installed herself in the place.

One letter came from the old couple to say that they were well and happy, and very grateful; and then we heard no more of the pair, whose strange and sad experience had separated two loving hearts for so many lonely, weary years.



VI.

THE STORY OF WILLIAM BODINE.

Everyone knows Bodine's planing factory, stair factory, mantel factory. They are the largest of the kind in the great manufacturing city of X——. The head of the firm, a prominent member of the Methodist Church, is distinguished for his large and generous charities. His name may be seen on all committees of investigation and amelioration of the condition of the indigent classes; he is also a large shareholder and director in various syndicates and bonded companies. His wife, too—a large, fair, blonde woman; a little overdressed, perhaps, and a trifle loud in speech,—is foremost in every good work, and has been especially prominent in connection with the Protestant Home for Aged Men and Women. To be sure, there have been whispers among the would-be four hundred of the metropolis that the Bodine family tree is but newly grafted,

and a scrubby shoot at that; but people are often envious when their neighbors have made a success in life, even though outwardly maintaining the most friendly and sociable relations. One does not need to have lived in the world many years to have learned this.

At the Home of whose inmates these humble chronicles have essayed to relate some incidents it is customary for the old men to take an airing in a large park in the vicinity once or twice a week. I had often noticed an old man sitting alone on a bench in the yard, smoking his pipe in a contented meditative way; yet with a half sad, half wistful expression that interested me. Subsequently I made his acquaintance, through the medium of a package of tobacco, one of many that had been given me by a generous friend for the poor old men. I discovered at once that he was English, and very soon afterward that he was not a Catholic, as he seldom or never attended Mass or Benediction.

One sunny morning in early spring I had met all those who were able sauntering down the road to the park, but found my new friend sitting in his accustomed place

in the courtyard. After I had transacted my business with Sister Emilia, I said:

"Why does not that old Englishman ever go with the others to the park? He does not seem very feeble, but I have never seen him out walking."

"No, he is not too feeble," she replied; "yet far from strong. He must have been a fine specimen of manhood once; for he tells me he is past eighty." Then, after scanning me with her own peculiar, quiz-zical expression, a pleasant smile illumined her face as she continued: "He has a reason, which I believe he would tell you if you were to ask him. It is not mine to tell, though I know it. But you seem to have the gift of getting the confidence of the old people. Suppose you ask him, in a casual way, as you go out."

"Very well," I said. "I have already felt some curiosity about him. He seems so very decent and self-respecting; and I have wondered also why, being a Protestant, he did not make an effort to enter one of their homes for the aged."

"I believe a hundred dollars is required as entrance fee, recommendations also; and there are always many more applicants

than there is room for. But our William had another good and sufficient reason. Run away and ask him," said the Sister, as she left me at the foot of the steps. "He has a strange story he could tell you."

The Fates were propitious. William had just finished filling his pipe as I halted near the bench, and after a couple of strong pulls he said:

"Morning, ma'am. I always think of you when I take a pull at the pipe; for that tobacco you gave me was the best I've had since I came to the country. The pipe is a great comforter when one is sad, ma'am."

"I will have some more for you when that is gone," I said. "An invalid gentleman, who feels for the needs of his poorer friends, keeps me supplied with it."

"God bless him and you, ma'am!" he replied. "The world's not all hard and bad, after all; though there was a day, not long since, when I wouldn't have said it."

"But you are quite content in this pleasant home, are you not?"

"Yes, ma'am; more than content. Please God, I'll end my days here now."

"Why do you never go out walking with the rest?" I inquired, seating myself beside him.

Taking the pipe from his mouth, and looking at me from between half-shut lids, he paused a moment as if considering before he answered:

"I'm afeard, ma'am,—I'm afeard; and that proud that I wouldn't be seen for a thousand pounds; no, not if it was paid in hand."

"Afraid of what?" I asked. "Surely no one could have any reason for hurting an old man like you."

"You don't understand, ma'am," he said, becoming more excited with every word. "I'm afeard they'll find me, and I don't want them to. I want them to be uneasy. For her I don't care in the least; but I'd like *him* to be uneasy,—to feel that maybe he had my death at his door. I'm not a good Christian, ma'am; though in times past I thought I was among the best. I have a revengeful heart, ma'am; and I've never asked the Lord to change it."

He laid down the pipe that had been but now such a solace, and removed his

hat to wipe the perspiration from his wrinkled face. The poor old hand trembled so violently that I took the handkerchief and wiped his forehead as gently as I could, sorry that I had unwittingly been the cause of so much pain.

“Don’t go, ma’am,” he said, pleadingly, —“don’t go. I’ll be over this presently, and then I shall be all right again. I’m bound to tell you the whole story, you’ve been so kind. But you’ll not talk of it,—you’re no talker?”

“You can trust me,” I said. “Although a woman, I never talk for the sake of talk. And your story, whatever it is, will be safe with me—at least while you are living.”

After restoring his pipe to its first condition by a few whiffs, he made me resume my seat beside him, and told me, as nearly as I can remember, the following strange, sad story:

“I know from the direction I’ve seen you come, and as they’ve told me you’ve lived long in these parts, that you have some knowledge of, perhaps acquaintance with, the family of Bodine—him that has the stair factory, and so on.”

“Yes,” I replied. “I have met his wife

once or twice, and I often see their names in the newspapers. They are very prominent people."

"So I've heard, ma'am; so I've heard. My name is Bodine,—William Bodine. The great B—— is my son."

"And you are here!" I exclaimed, involuntarily lifting my eyes to the tower of a massive stone residence, which could be faintly discerned through the trees that embowered it, though it was nearly a mile away.

The old man's glance followed me, and he looked in silence for a moment.

"Is that the place, ma'am?" he asked. "I've thought so many a time, though I wasn't sure; never having seen the place but once, and that in a flash of lightning, as it were."

"Yes, that is it," I answered. "But how is it possible—"

"That's just what I'm going to tell you, ma'am. Forty years ago I was a journeyman carpenter at Leeds, with a fine family of girls about me. My wife was dead. There was only one lad; and he a bit wild, but a good workman. We were not very well off in the world's goods, but comfort-

able enough. Two of the girls were married to decent tradesmen; two of them worked at the milliner's trade; and Patty, the eldest, kept the house. 'Twas just before the Crimean War, when my lad, with two others, heard strange tales of the pressgang; and as none of them cared for soldiering, one fine morning the three started for America. And, strange as it may seem, that was the last I heard of Willie for near forty years.

“Things went hard with me. I got the rheumatism in my left hand. My two fine girls died of the cholera. The married ones sailed for Australia, with their families, to better themselves; and the ship was never heard of again. Patty, the only one left, sickened after this, and went off in a decline. And so I lived from hand to mouth—a job here and a day there,—till my eyesight began to fail, and I saw nothing ahead of me but the workhouse. That is a terrible thing for an honest, decent man,—one, too, that was never beholden to any one for a shilling. Never a word came to me from over-seas; I made no doubt but my lad was dead and gone. I never thought he'd have deserted his

old father like that; for when he was a boy he was very affectionate.

"One day, two years come this June, I carried a bag for a gentleman from one lodging to another. On the way he told me he was an American from this town. He asked me my name. I gave it to him in full as my father had me christened—William Cummis Bodine. 'Why,' said he, 'there's a rich fellow in our place at home with that very name! An Englishman, too, I believe. I wonder if he's a relative? Such an odd name, you know.' I divined that minute that the man he spoke of was my own lad; but if he was rich, it wouldn't be me that would be the first to let a stranger know of the poverty of his poor old father. 'What trade does he follow, sir?' I asked. 'He is what we call a builder, and has window and stair factories besides.' I made sure from that, but was crafty enough to say nothing.

"As soon as I got back to my poor little place I wrote a letter to my lad, and after a month's time got an answer enclosing ten pounds. He had prospered well, he said, of late years; but in the beginning had met with many reverses, and was so

discouraged that he could not write. Afterward he thought me dead.

“Oh, if I had only let well enough alone! I wrote back, asking him to send for me; that I wanted to see him once before I died, as he was all I had left in the world. When he answered that letter he told me to wait till spring, when he and his wife were coming over, and that they would take me back with them. This letter had a five-pound note. Crazy that I was, I wouldn't take the counsel of that good man the minister, who advised me to bide a little; but I feared that, old as I was and weakly, I should be dead before spring, and might never see my lad again. Says he: ‘William, your son has lived forty years without seeking you: do not thrust yourself on him now. Wait till he comes over. And, more than that, how do you know what kind of a wife he has?’ (This was when I told him my purpose of coming to America directly.) I would hear none of him, ma'am; but, after buying a few little things I needed, took steerage passage from Liverpool at once. I spent one day in New York, and reached **this** place with a couple of shillings in my pocket.’”

"And had you given your son no intimation of your coming?" I asked.

"None whatever, ma'am. I wanted to surprise him like," he said, with a bitter smile. "And I did; and he surprised me, too, I assure you.

"It was of a Saturday morning in late October, and I went to the factory—I had the address from the letters he wrote. He hadn't got down, the young fellow in the office said,—hadn't been there for a couple of days; was not feeling well. I asked for the address of his dwelling-place, which he gave kindly enough; remarking, though, that Mr. Bodine didn't like to be bothered that way. 'I promise you I shall not bother him,' said I; and went on my way rejoicing.

"The tram-cars, or street-cars as you call them here, took me most of the road. It was a long ride, and I hadn't had a bite that morning. When I found the place, with the name cut into the stone pillar of the gateway, I felt a bit flustered; for I had never imagined anything so fine for my lad. I went to the side door; a manservant opened it. I asked for the master. 'Sick,' said the lackey, short like that;

and was about to shut the door in my face. A stout, handsome woman was passing through the hall.

“‘What is it, my good man?’ said she. ‘Can I serve you in any way? Perhaps you are an applicant for admission to the Home for Aged Men. If so, I am sorry to say there are no vacancies at present.’

“‘I felt the red rise in my old cheek. ‘No, ma’am,’ said I. ‘It is Mr. Bodine I want speech with. I have come many a mile over land and sea, ma’am; and have longed for this day for forty years.’

“‘An old family servant, perhaps,’ said she, taking me by the hand. Then, giving a sharp look at the grinning footman, or whatever you may call him, beside her, she said, ‘You may go, Hopkins.’ Turning to me: ‘Come into the library, and I will see if my husband can receive you.’ She drew me into the room and shut the door fast. ‘Old man,’ said she, ‘who are you?’

“‘I am William Bodine’s father,’ said I, wishing myself back in England with every breath; for there were hatred and anger in the woman’s eye, and there was no need to tell me she was my lad’s wife.

“‘Stay there!’ she shrieked out, and

went into the next room. I heard loud talking, the door opened and my lad came in. I knew him through all the changes of years.

"'Is it true?' she shouted,—'is it true? —is this old beggar your father?'

"'Yes, Amanda,' he said, trying to reach me; but she made a barrier of her hands.

"'William,' said I, 'what does it mean? Madam, I am no beggar.'

"'You are a shameful old wretch!' she said. 'I never heard of you before today. If you are his father, he will have to do something for you, no doubt; but in the meantime we shall have to hide you somewhere till we can dispose of you.'

"'Father,' said my boy, leaning against the door—he looked weak and ill,—'why did you not wait until the spring?'

"'So you did know of it, did you?' cried the woman. 'You haven't thought him dead all these years? Where shall I put you, old man, so that the servants may not know, until we can send you back?' And she tramped up and down the room like a mad woman.

"'I was weak from fasting, and tired

from my long journey; and I am a very old man, ma'am,—a very old man. But my blood was never hotter than at that moment, when I dashed the creature aside and strode up to my lad.

“‘William,’ said I, ‘is that how it is to be? Are you ashamed of your old father?’

“‘No,’ he said,—‘no, father; but it is awkward, and my wife never knew. Be quiet, and we will think about what is to be done.’

“‘With that I took up my stick. ‘There is only one thing to be done,’ I said. ‘I was a poor fool, I know; but I am a man again. May God forgive you—after He has punished you,’ I said; ‘but my face you will never see again!’

“‘Before either of them could speak, I rushed from the room. For indeed, ma'am, I was sore afeard they'd have me taken for a lunatic. I've read of such. I wandered up one road and down another all that day, eating a few beech nuts I found in the park. Toward nightfall I saw this place with the cross above it, and I knew they'd take me in if any one would. 'Twas lucky. An old man had died that day. I told the good Mother my story, and

showed her the name in my hat, and on some of my linen. They sent to the station for my box, and here I've been ever since, happy and content. It's somewhat queer, though; I oftentimes study it over. I came from the dread of the poorhouse at home to the poorhouse here. But it's different: no one knows me."

"And what of your son?"

"Nothing, ma'am; only I never want them to find me, living or dead. I hope they think I've drowned myself, ma'am. I hope they're kept awake nights by the thought of me."

"And you will not allow the Sisters to make any sign?"

"I've told those good Sisters that the first wink they'd give, I was away to the lake in the park, ma'am,—as I would be," he said, with an air of grim determination that made me shiver. Then he added: "Living, a bite and sup, ma'am; dead, the Potter's Field,—that's all I ask. And I leave the Lord to do what He likes with those that left me this way. The Sisters won't betray me, never fear: I trust them. But I'll never put my feet out of this as long as they'll keep me, lest *they* should

find out I was living. I want to torture them—hm! hm!”

The pipe was lying idly on the bench now, and the old man peered at me again through half-closed eyes, rubbing his hands together with a sort of savage glee.

“William,” I said, after a pause, during which I was undecided whether or not to give him some information I possessed, “I think they have advertised for you—that they are still trying to find you. Your son, no doubt, is deeply sorry; and—and—perhaps I had better fetch you the daily paper.”

“Do, ma’am, do!” said the old man, eagerly. “I’ll be obliged to you.”

“In the meantime try and get into a better frame of mind, and pray all you can. Do not let your last days be altogether clouded by this sad affair.”

“I’ve heard many a preacher, ma’am, in my time,” replied the old man, dryly; “and I’m old enough almost to be your grandfather. Only don’t blab; and another bit of that fine tobacco when you come again, please. Why, bless your soul, I’m happy as the day is long!”

And so I left him. When I returned

home I sought and found the advertisement referred to. It had appeared in the paper daily for months, and read as follows:

"If W. C. B., lately of Leeds, England, will communicate with his son, he will greatly relieve the mind of

"W. C. B."

I took it to Sister Emilia, who laid it before the good Mother. After mature deliberation they decided that no one had any right to interfere without the permission of the old man. When I showed it to him, he seemed to gloat over it. He read it again and again, and asked permission to keep it. But my purpose entirely failed of its object. "I thought I could torture them," he said; "I *knew* I could." After that the subject was never renewed between us. We would talk together in a friendly way, and he often made room for me on the bench where he always sat, on fair days, smoking his briar-wood pipe.

But he grew feeble with the winter cold, and after the holidays took to his bed. When the Sisters became satisfied that he could not live much longer, they asked if he would have a minister. "No," he said.

“Just ask that young priest that serves here to step in of a morning and pray the Lord’s Prayer with me.”

The obliging Father spent several half hours with the old man after this; and on one occasion left him a crucifix, which he kept about him until the end.

One day, toward the close of Lent, Sister Emilia asked him if he would not allow her to send for his son.

“You know, William,” she remarked gently, “you wish to die at peace with all mankind; and Christ on the Cross forgave His enemies.”

He deliberated for a while, and thus replied: “Well, yes, Sister—for the lad’s sake though, not mine. Send for him in the morning.”

When Sister Emilia went to his bedside at the dawn of day, she found he had died peacefully in the night, without disturbing any one about him.

Released from their promise of secrecy by the permission of the day before, the Little Sisters sent at once to his son. What occurred I never inquired, but I know that an overflowing hamper goes from the stone house on the hill to the Home at

Christmas-time; that on the annual list of contributions to the work of the Little Sisters there is always a cheque for one hundred dollars signed, "William Cummis Bodine"; also that on the large monument in the Bodine lot, in one of the most beautiful cemeteries in the land, are traced these lines: "William Cummis Bodine, Sr. Died 18—, full of good deeds and virtues, in the eighty-fourth year of his age."

Tardy reparation perhaps, yet who shall say unacceptable to the Almighty?



VII.

AN ECCENTRIC OLD COUPLE.

One day the good Mother was summoned to the parlor to receive two old people who were seeking admission. They proved to be a man of about seventy, and his wife, probably a little younger. They were decently dressed, had a couple of changes of clothing in an old satchel, and presented a look of thriftiness at variance with their poor condition. But they told a straightforward story of a life of industry brought to poverty by a chain of untoward circumstances. And when the old man capped the climax of his pitiful tale by taking fifty dollars from a tattered wallet, and placing it in the Sister's hand, with the words, "Take it, Sister, and do the best you can for us with it," her sympathy took on the added sentiment of admiration. It seemed so pathetic and so honest, she said, thus to surrender their last dollar to her care, that she made no demur about receiv-

ing them, though the house was already full.

For four years they were most exemplary inmates. The old lady was quite industrious, and made herself useful in various small ways. Her husband had a genius for gardening, and spent much time among the plants and flowers. They always went into the city on recreation days, if the weather was favorable; but saw no visitors, and received no letters.

One Monday morning they went out as usual; evening came, and they had not returned. The next day the Sisters discovered that the old satchel containing some winter clothing had been taken, from which they inferred that the departure of the old couple had been foreseen and planned. None of the old people were aware of their intentions; and, although the Sisters regretted the circumstance, their places were soon filled, and the matter soon passed into oblivion.

Two years subsequently one of the Little Sisters was transferred to a New York house; and after a few months' residence there, was sent with a companion by her superior to investigate the case of

an applicant in a small adjacent town, who asked for admission to the Home.

It was almost twilight when the Sisters left the cars, and were not quite certain of the direction of the convent where they were to pass the night. A pretty little cottage, surrounded by trees and flowers, stood a short distance from the roadside; and the vegetable garden behind it was neat and well cared for. An old man sat in the doorway smoking. As the Sister lifted the latch of the gate to enter the garden, she noticed something familiar in his aspect, as well as in that of the old woman who stepped to the threshold.

“Can you tell me,” she began—“why, it is Patrick Donlan! And you, Bridget!” she continued, as the old woman shrank back into the kitchen. “What brought you here, Patrick?”

“Holy Moses, it’s Sister Clara!” he exclaimed; and without further ado ran as briskly as his legs could carry him to the back of the yard, leaving his wife to bear the brunt of inquiry as best she might.

Seeing no alternative, the old woman put a bold face on the matter, and replied as she came forward:

"It's me, then, that's glad to see you, Sister Clara; though you're the last one I was expecting. Come in, Sister dear; and you, too, Sister, and have chairs. 'Tis a shame for Pat to run away."

The Sisters entered as bidden, and sat down. Without waiting to be further interrogated, the woman continued:

"Ye see, Sister,—we—we were taken—as it were,—I mean—yes Pat!" as she hastened to the window, whither by some signal unnoticed by her visitors she had been summoned. "Begging your pardon for a minute, Sisters. Pat wants me, and I'll be back shortly."

Wherewith she disappeared, and all without was silent. The guests, particularly Sister Clara, employed the interval in looking about them. The room in which they sat was large and very comfortable; through two open doors they caught glimpses of a well-furnished sitting-room and neat bedroom.

Time passed; it was growing dark, and their hosts did not return. At length they arose and passed out into the road, as it was evident the old people were purposely absenting themselves. They found the

convent without much difficulty. In the morning, after having performed her errand in the town, Sister Clara returned to the convent, where she made some inquiries as to her friends of the preceding evening, the former inmates of the Home at L——.

To her surprise, she learned that Patrick Donlan had been in the employ of the railroad for many years, until old age interfered with his usefulness, and was considered a well-to-do man in the place. However, he and his wife bore the reputation of being penurious, and were never known to contribute anything to church purposes or charity of any kind. Six years previous their only son, a wild fellow, had got into some trouble; and in order to pay the large fine consequent upon his misdemeanor, his father had to mortgage his house and lot for several hundred dollars. He had then rented the place for three years, at a hundred dollars a year; and, having obtained a pass from the railroad company for himself and his wife, had gone West, ostensibly to visit relatives. Their long absence had been commented upon; but they had finally returned, and were once more living in their old home.

The superior had heard that their son, having reformed, contributed to their support; which Patrick also eked out by the sale of flowers, plants, and vegetables, and an occasional day at light gardening.

A few years after, when relating the event, Sister Clara said her admiration of their ingenuity had almost dispelled whatever natural indignation she might have felt at their deceit. On her way to the train she stopped at the house; but the doors were closed, and all was silent about the place. No doubt they had thought it wisest to absent themselves until after her departure. She had a humorous vein in her nature, which she evidenced in this case by writing on a slip of paper the following reminder of her presence: "When you are really in poverty and have no home, come to the Little Sisters, and they will receive you." Slipping it under the door, she pursued her journey.

"It seems almost incredible," she said, "that old people used to the comforts of their own home would voluntarily surrender them for such a length of time, and live apparently in such content and happiness as they appeared to enjoy while

with us. Doubtless the plan originated in a desire to retrieve, as soon as possible, the loss entailed by the wrong-doing of their son. I believe also that they did it without any misgivings as to the injustice of it, as far as we were concerned. They gave our good Mother fifty dollars when they entered, and during the time they remained with us both earned their board and lodging. Perhaps they considered us in their debt; who knows?"

"It was very ingenious on their part to have selected a city so far removed from their own home as a basis of operations," I remarked.

"Yes, indeed; and it must have cost the poor things not a little to leave their pretty home for so long a time. To me the manner of their leave-taking was in keeping with the rest of the story. They were ashamed, and knew not how otherwise to demean themselves. From their extremely narrow point of view, I can really sympathize with them."

"You will end by considering them a greatly wronged and unappreciated couple, in that you neglected to take up a collection for them on your return to L——,"

I replied, amused at her charitable logic.

"Now you are quizzing me," she said, her bright face a ripple of smiles. "But consider their fright and mortification when they saw me that evening. At bottom was the kindly Irish heart, therefore they could not have helped but suffer. Nay, do not look so incredulous, and shake your head in that provoking way. Nothing will make me believe but that the whole affair will be a source of regret and shame to them while they live,—I mean now that they are found out, poor souls! I know they are not ungrateful."

She was not far wrong in her kindly estimate of the old culprits. A few months later the Little Sisters received a bequest of two hundred dollars, left to them by the will of Patrick Donlan, deceased, late of R——, New York.



VIII.

A LIFE-LONG SORROW.

It is again a sweet, pale-faced old German woman the story of whose sorrows I have chosen for the subject of the present sketch. A painful chronic disease had made it impossible for her to continue her avocation of washing and mending fine laces. She had not been long at the Little Sisters when I spoke to her one pleasant morning, as she sat on the piazza feeding the pigeons, who circled about her, eager for the crumbs she scattered on the gravel-walk.

“You like the pigeons and birds?” I inquired,—I had often seen her talking to the canaries that hung on the porch beside her accustomed seat.

“Yes,” she replied. “In my own home, near Vienna, my father, who loved all living things, had many like these, but much finer. He was a schoolmaster and also a music-teacher, and very hard-worked,—such was his recreation.”

On this occasion, and frequently thereafter, we conversed together with great freedom. I found her interesting, and my companionship seemed to afford her pleasure. But we had been friends some time before I learned that she had an almost life-long sorrow, of a nature so terrible that I could not help wondering how she had endured it for so many years without losing her reason.

One day my little boy, a curly-haired child of three, accompanied me to the Home. It was a sunny day, and he played about the walks while I sat with old Mrs. Kaulbach on the piazza. Suddenly she called him to her. Taking his little hand, she pressed it passionately, tears in her eyes. As he ran away, she said to me:

"Not often I notice the child, madam; but not because I do not love him. It makes me too much think of my own boy."

"Ah! you perhaps lost one at his age?" I said, sympathizingly.

"Yes, *lost* him,—you are right. He went away from me one day, and I never saw him again. That is my life story."

"And you never found him—never knew what became of him?"

“Not to this hour, madam. Thus I always see him, with his curls and his bright eyes, and the pretty velvet suit I had put on him for the first time.”

She turned her sad eyes upon me as she spoke. They were filled with such an intensity of sorrow that I knew not how to answer her. Drawing her chair close to mine, she took my hand in both of hers.

“I will tell you all,” she said. “Not often do I talk, but sometimes it is a relief. My husband too was a music-teacher, and I. We came to this country young; we thought to get rich, perhaps, in America. He was a good fellow, but too fond of company; so it happened that when he became engaged in an orchestra that he sometimes drank too much. But he was kind to me always, and loved our child,—our dear Herman, named for my father.

“But once, after the theatre, my husband, my Louis, was cut with a plate which some one threw in play at a supper; and a blood-vessel was burst in his wrist. He was never strong after. Soon he could play no more on the violin; then he must stop giving his piano lessons. Some of them I took with my own. Then I could

not leave him, he grew so weak, and the child was so young. Fine embroidery and lace mending and washing I could do,—in those days more money was made that way than now, I think. He died at last, leaving me alone with the child.

“The little fellow was sweet and lovely; my heart was wrapped in him. Never did I go from the house without him; never did I leave him to the care of neighbors; never did I send him to play with children on the street; never even to the sidewalk did he go alone. To market I took him with me, to the grocer’s, to confession when I went on Saturdays, to Mass always. So that I should not leave him ever, I made that those who took lessons from me should come to my rooms for that. On Sundays and many times in the afternoons I took him by the hand into the green fields and to the Park. That was in Philadelphia city.

“Music he loved. He would stand at my side in the darkening hour to hear me play, and always with delight. We had no other friends or companions; we wanted none: we were enough for each other. Where we lived the people were good and decent, but not for me congenial;

though we were all kind together. High rent I could not pay, and it was of necessity that I should live in a humble place.

“It was in April. I had made him a little velvet suit. He looked so pretty. I kissed him a dozen times. We were going to the Park. It was Sunday. I washed the dishes from our little dinner, and went to make ready.

“‘Mamma,’ he asked, ‘may I sit on the door-step downstairs till you come?’

“‘You will not run away?’ I said.

“‘No, mamma; where should I run to?’ he answered, sweetly.

“‘Go then,’ said I; ‘I will hurry.’

“I kissed him, and he went down. In ten minutes I was ready. Other families lived in the house. The door was open. I called him: he was not there. Never, madam, from that moment have I seen his face nor heard anything of him.”

“Ah, poor mother! what a sorrow, what a cross!” I said.

“Yes,” she replied,—“a cross of forty years. I went every place. The neighbors helped; poor people are always kind. It was in the papers a long time. I heard nothing. No one had seen him, even at

the door. In the broad daylight, in the open street, who could take a little child without an outcry, without being seen? It was on the outskirts of the city. There was a gypsy camp not far away. He was not there. Two gypsy women came to me to say, to swear, they had not seen or taken the child. There was no place in which he could have fallen."

"I wonder that you lived."

"I prayed to die. I asked God to take my reason, that I could not think, that I might not remember. I never forgot for a single day, a single night.

"I grew old fast. My hair turned white. Whenever I went out, my eyes were on every group of children. I lingered about the school-houses; I went to the refuges; at night I rushed into dark courts and alleys, and ran up steep stairs in tenement houses, when I heard the cry of a child. Sometimes in a crowd I have thought I saw his face. When I ran after such a child I found myself mistaken. And I so went on for a dozen years perhaps, forgetting that he would be growing older, always looking for the little boy of five.

"At last I began to think not so would

he look now, but thus—like a lad, like a young man. Now, if he lives he must be middle-aged. Maybe he is adopted by some good people, who have loved and educated him; maybe he is a good man. The worst thought is that perhaps he may have fallen among thieves, and that he may be even one of them. To dwell upon that thought would be to despair. *That*, too, I have done,—I have fought with God. I have blasphemed Him in my heart. I have been months without going into a church. But not now any more for a long time.

“Once at Easter time, when I had not been at Mass all Lent, I dreamed I saw my boy again, but in his little white night-gown. He put his hand in mine, and said: ‘Mother, mother, be happy!’ I awoke and was consoled. From that day I have felt him to be in heaven; and if I force myself to think otherwise, the peace will still come back to me.

“As the days go by, and I suffer more in my body, knowing that it is near the end, I seem to come close to him once more. At first I never dreamed of him; though all day long I thought of nothing

else, and walked the streets in search of him far into the sleepless night. But now I long for the hours when I may dream, always of him. In my arms, a little baby, I am singing him to sleep; his hand in mine as we walk together in the fields; by my side in the darkness while I play the piano; his arms around me in our sleep; at my knees saying his little prayer—so do I see him always. In the day I remember my dreams, and so am happy and resigned."

I could not speak to her. She saw it, and took my hand once more.

"Ah, it hurts you, dear lady!" she said, "and I have been cruel; but not so did I mean it. Sometimes, for years, not a word to a human soul; then, like a torrent, the memory and the grief overflows, and I must speak."

"No, no! It has relieved you," I replied, "and I am glad. But it is so terrible to think how you have suffered all these years, and must still suffer, that I have no words with which to offer consolation."

"Go, now, with your little boy," she said, turning abruptly away. "Here he comes, laughing. Love him and watch

over him; and may the good God in His mercy spare him to you,—at least that if he should be taken, you may watch beside his dying bed.”

I do not think that in all my life anything affected me like that poor old woman's sad experience. It really was a joy to me to see her growing weaker every time I visited the Home after I had heard her story. And when, one bright spring morning, the Little Sisters told me she had died the night before, I felt a burthen of sorrow lifted from my soul, that seemed more real and personal than any vicarious suffering I had ever known.



IX.

A STRANGE, SAD STORY.

It sometimes happens that old married couples who have lived happily together for many years are obliged, through stress of poverty and other misfortunes, to seek the shelter of the establishments of the Little Sisters of the Poor in their declining days. I have frequently remarked that this crowning trial seems to be reserved for those to whom the privilege of spending the remnant of their lives in company would have been a most precious consolation. Doubtless Heaven has a supreme reward in store for these poor resigned creatures,—for they are seldom otherwise than resigned.

During one day of each week they are permitted to be together, to go abroad if they have friends, or to wander about the grounds if they are not fortunate enough to have a visiting place. When the weather is inclement, they are forced to exchange their confidences and reminiscences in the

ordinary sitting-room. I have often wished it could be differently arranged for these poor people; but no doubt it has been found impracticable, for there is nothing which is in their power to perform left undone for their inmates by the Little Sisters.

I was much interested in an old French couple who, at the time I made their acquaintance, had been *protégés* of the Little Sisters for several years. On recreation days they were generally to be found in the Park near the Home,—sometimes walking under the trees, sometimes sitting hand in hand on one of the benches. I came upon them suddenly one morning as they sat conversing in low tones:

“*Bon jour, Monsieur et Madame Duclos!*” I said. “You are like a pair of lovers sitting here.”

Smiling, they looked in each other's face, while he answered:

“Thanks, madame! Lovers we have been these many years; eh, Nanette?”

“Yes, yes!” was the reply. “I haf not known that any two haf been more fond of each other than you and I, *mon Jacques*. But with love goes sorrow too, and of that we haf had much.”

"Yes?" I said. "It is sad that in your old age you should be thus separated, especially when in heart you are so united."

"No, no!" hastily answered the old man. "That we do not mind; or rather, I should say, we take it as right—from God, as a penance."

"As a penance!" I exclaimed. "Surely two such good people as you can not think yourselves deserving of such a penance?"

They looked at each other gravely for a moment, then the old woman spoke:

"We haf once been young, madame; and we haf not been always good."

"She speaks truth," said the old man, answering my look of incredulity. "It is a strange story, ours. We haf not murdered any one, and we haf not stolen; but in our lifetime we haf done wrong. It is now many years; and since the good God sends us crosses, we feel that He has forgiven us. Eh, Nanette?"

"So I hope, Jacques," she said. "Ah! madame, it is true what they say in the book: 'Each life may be tragedy.' Yours may haf story too, but not like ours. Who has lifed to be twenty-five or thirty years

knows that each in his heart has bitterness. Is it not so?"

"Yes, indeed," I replied. "But I feel confident that whatever yours may have been, the peace of God is certainly with you in your old age."

"May the good God grant that it is so! I hope that it is so," said the old woman reverently, as I passed on, leaving them to their sweet if sad reunion.

The next time I met old Duclos in the Park he was alone. His Nanette had gone before him, as he said, to make easy the way he hoped soon to traverse. He was sitting on the same bench where that day they had been resting together; and I sat down beside him in sympathy, yet scarcely knowing what to say. On such occasions I have always hesitated to reopen the fresh wound. For a time he, too, was silent. At length he began:

"You are kind, madame, and well I know what is in your heart for me. To some it is given to feel without words what others feel for them: so it is with me. My dear Nanette also, she was of that kind. Over there," waving his hand in the direction of the Home,—“over there, the

Sisters, I haf no words to speak of them, they are so good. The old people also, many are kind and haf been of sympathy wis me, and I haf thank them. But, pardon me, madame, you will understan', many too are of rough nature. Nanette and me we were not of the common—what you call the lowest class; and we haf kept together; we haf not much like some of them. You understan', madame? you not displeas?"

When I had assured him that I understood and was not displeased, for I readily appreciated the truth of his words, he continued:

"One day, madame, the last time she see you, I say that we haf done great wrong. Now that my dear Nanette has gone to wait for me in that home of heaven, I haf t'ought I better tell you what I mean, fear you may think other things. Wrong we haf done, but my dear Nanette she was mostly innocent."

"As you wish, M. Duclos," I said; "but I never gave it a thought after I left you."

"Thanks, madame," he replied. "You are good lady and Christian. But I will like to tell you all now. You haf been so

good at the end, wis the flowers at the coffin that you send."

"Then, if it pleases you to tell it, I shall be pleased to hear," I said.

"It does please me," he answered. "You haf seen, madame, that I haf been ver' big and strong; and my Nanette she was ver' small—little. At Nevers, where we lif, her father haf ver' large baker-shop, he haf been pretty rich. He haf marry her when she is fifteen to another bakerman with ver' large shop. He haf give her big *dot*; but, like in France, he haf not ask her if she will. This man he been married three times before he marry Nanette, and no one like him. He been more than fifty years old. He haf beat and beat her; she frighten most to death, I haf been painter—sign-painter,—and I haf lodge in same house. I am twenty-five years old. I love Nanette; I am torn to pieces in my heart for pitying her. She not know it, madame—oh, no, she not know it,—not at all!

"One night he beat her awful, then he go away on business to another town. I meet her on the stairs: I haf heard her scream. I say: 'Come wis me; we run away together.' She only a child, she

innocent; she come, she so frighten of him. When we gone, then she know that I love her, that I want her for my wife; but say she can not stay wis me, or the people talk. So we come to America, and I say: 'Nanette, shall we go before the priest and marry? He not know.' She say: 'No, Jacques. That be worse: that be what you call sacrilege.' So we go to church, but never to confession. And the priest he scold us for that when our little boy and girl they are born and we go for to haf them baptize. But we say not'in'; what could we say? We haf plenty money; I own houses. My girl and boy ver' good; they grow up; they make First Communion; they good Cat'olics; they beg us to go to confession, but we can not.

'If Nanette all happy I don' know. I all happy; I not think about it any more. Sometimes, sure enough, I feel bad for them children; but I forget. One day the priest come for the mission. We go; he preach till my soul is troubled. He is French, too, like us. I go to him and tell him all. He say he will write to Nevers and fin' out if Nanette's husband is dead; if he not be dead, then if we will do right

we part. That was hard, hard, madame; but Nanette and me we pray, and we know not how we tell them children. The priest write; the man dead many years. Nanette and me we glad; we thank God. We go to confession; we feel happy. The children so glad. We don' tell them; they needn't know. We get married in private; all is right again. That priest say before he go: 'You ready for crosses? For maybe God send you some now; I not wonder. You come back to Him, maybe He try you.'

"Nanette and me we stand still, we not speak. Some time Nanette say: 'Yes, Father, we try to be ready.' Then I say so too. That priest he dead now; they say he saint and work miracle; he prophet too. His words come true. Our girl die first, our boy next; our houses burn, our cows die, our bank where we keep the money fall down. I work at my trade again; then I get rheumatism. Poor Nanette she haf such headache she lie in bed all day. This take years, then we be old."

"And were you resigned to all those crosses?" I asked, filled with compassion at his sad recital.

"Yes, madame, I think we be; for we haf much cause to thank the good God. And we haf promise to bear well our crosses, like the Father tell us."

"And when you were obliged to come to the Little Sisters?"

"Then we haf said the good God means this, that we come once more unite in heaven. I by her side when she die; I hold her hand; she tell me to come soon. You see, madame, as I haf said before, we haf not murder, we haf not stolen, but we haf done wrong; and it is well that God haf punish us here, maybe not in the hereafter. But I do not think, madame, that we haf done so wrong as some, especially Nanette, who was so young, such a child, and so frightened of that man. He was a ver' bad man, madame; and I haf often t'ought Nanette's father he had much sin to answer. But that is the way in France,—they marry so. And we would better think only of our own sins, each of his own.

"And so I haf told you, madame, because you haf been kind, and because I would not like that you must think too bad of my Nanette, my poor Nanette!"

As we sat there in the autumn sunshine,

I made no comment on the strange, sad story; but spoke as best I might some few words of cheer and sympathy to the poor old soul, whose sins had been so humbly acknowledged, and I believe, in God's boundless mercy, all forgiven.

When the trees were putting forth their first tender leaves, they laid him to rest beside his dear Nanette in the old graveyard.



X.

THE STORY OF GIUSEPPE POGHI.

Pietro Rovi and Giuseppe Poghi, the only Italians at the Home, generally sat together in the men's yard, in the afternoon, smoking and chatting,—that is to say, Rovi chatted and his friend listened; for he seemed a silent, morose man, to whom the world had been unkind, and who was only waiting for the great change which would, it was to be hoped, even all things for him.

It came suddenly in the night. The day following, seeing Pietro alone in his accustomed place, I went out of my way a few steps to speak with him.

“You are lonely, no doubt, without your friend, Pietro?” I said, taking a seat beside him.

“Yes, a little,” was the response. “But I have known long time that he must soon die; and I have work too long alone in mines, in California, to care much for

anybody, whether he is here or not. If I have only enough money to go back there, or if I am strong enough to walk back, and work part my way, I go there. But that can not be for me."

"How long have you been in this part of the country?" I inquired.

"Only five year. Three I am at the Little Sisters; and I like very much to be with them, if it is not for the climate,—so hot in summer, so cold in winter. In California now it is like in Italy,—hot days maybe, but not so hot as here, and in the nights always under a blanket; and the winter time there—oh, it is lovely!"

"Why did you come so far East at your time of life—you must be long past sixty?"

"Pretty soon seventy year," was the reply. "I came with fifty other foolish men. It was a railroad that would be build, with big wages. The man fooled us. We all give twenty-five dollar, and he run away when we get in Chicago. I don't know how that is,—that railroad was really build, but he bring too much people. It was some kind of fraud."

"Did Giuseppe come then?"

"No, ma'am: Giuseppe here in this

house when I come. He much change, and at first deny; but I know his name. He not change that, nor his face all. He was bad man, that Giuseppe; but I feel sorry for him some, and I stay with him. You ever hear him talk?"

"No, I never did."

"Well, he have gone to school much in the old country. His father have big factory for wax-candles at Bologna, his brother a priest. He have other brother once in this country; pretty rich man. He dead now too. Giuseppe run away to America. You like to hear about him? I think he pretty sorry before he die."

"Yes, Pietro, if you wish to tell me," I said, more from a desire to please the old man than anything else.

"Well, you not in a hurry? I tell you. You see, Giacomo Poghi, the oldest one, I not know him very much, but he good man. He live in San Francisco; he keep hardware and miner's goods. Very good man—not cheat never. Go always to church too, with his wife, and give much to the priest and the poor. Then Giuseppe he come; run away from his home; done some very bad act there. So his brother set him

up in drug-store after a while, spend good deal money on that. Giuseppe he live in house with his brother, but not like his wife. So then they quarrel a little bit, and Giuseppe he take couple rooms behind his shop. I work in chop-house next door, and so I know him pretty well. Then he marry good woman. He get along pretty nice. They have three children. His brother come all time to see him, and never take back that money he lend him—he give it to him. After a while I go the mines. I stay there three year. When I come back I say:

“ ‘Where your brother now?’ ”

“ ‘I don’t know,’ he say. ‘He all broke up. He put his money in mining stocks, and burst up mines. He all broke. He go away from San Francisco with his wife. I believe he have some little ranch close to Los Angeles. I don’t know about him.’ ”

“ ‘You help him some when he burst up?’ I say to Giuseppe.

“ ‘I got plenty to do when I take care of my own family,’ he say to me. ‘I not help him—he not ask me.’ ”

“ ‘But he help you when you come first. You better not forget that,’ I say.

"Then he get mad at me, and tell me to mind my own business, and I go away. I not like that kind of man.

"Five, six year pass away. Giuseppe Poghi make his store bigger, and he get plenty money. Some time I come back, and work in that chop-house again. Sometimes I see him. One time I go in his store for cigar. He reading a letter then. He say to me:

" 'Pietro,' he say, 'this letter from my brother. I not hear from him for good while. His wife die three year ago. I not hear from him since. Now he write me he sick, and please come and see him.'

" 'You go?' I say; but I think not from his face.

" 'How I go?' he say. 'My wife not understand this business, no clerk can be trust. How I go?'

" 'Three or four days, that not much,' I say. 'You not lose much for three or four days.'

" 'No, I not go,' he say. And I go away.

" 'Two weeks maybe I come again in his shop, and he say:

" 'I get 'nother letter from my brother.

He bother me all the time come see him before he die.'

"I say: 'You go this time? If I be in your place I would. Your brother good to you. He all alone; he like to see you before he die. Maybe he be poor.'

" 'Course he be,' Giuseppe say. 'Want me to give him something, I know.'

"Then I say: 'If he not ask you for anything, how you know? That very nice, I think, in his place. You in good business, Mr. Poghi. You brother need you; you better go.'

"He not say anything, and I go away again. It come maybe two weeks longer, and I go in his store again. He look terrible bad.

" 'What ail you, Mr. Poghi?' I say. 'You sick, or something go wrong in your business? Or maybe your brother dead, and you feel sorry?'

" 'I think it terrible shame!' he say. 'There ought to be some law against such things.'

" 'What things?' I say.

" 'Sit down, Pietro,' he say, 'and I tell you.' (I think he like to talk to me, for I speak his own language; and when we

in trouble we like to talk our own tongue.)
 'Sit down, Pietro,' he say again. And I
 sit down. Then he tell me all:

"'Yesterday morning a strange priest
 he come in here, and ask for me. I come
 down. He very nice man. He come from
 Los Angeles, and he know my brother.
 I say: "Father, I very glad to see you,
 and I sorry my brother sick; but I can
 do nothing for him, with my own family."
 Then he say: "He ask you do anything
 for him?" I say: "No." Then he say:
 "He send me here to tell you something;
 and now that I see you and hear you
 talk, I very glad to do it, though before I
 hate to. I come up here on trip, and I
 promise your brother that I tell you the
 message he send."—"Very well," I say;
 "tell it."—"You know your brother pretty
 rich, eh?" the priest say.—"No," I say;
 "I guess you mistaken, Father. Once he
 have plenty money, but he lose it all
 long ago."—"I guess *you* mistaken," the
 priest say; "he own forty-acre ranch near
 Los Angeles. He buy it long ago for three
 hundred dollar. Four year ago he sell
 it in the boom for one hundred thousand.
 That pretty rich, eh?"—"I not know that,

Father," I say. "Why he never tell me?" — "I don't know," the priest say. "That make no difference now. Last week he send for me, and make his confession. Then he say to me: 'Father, I have one brother in San Francisco. I long to see him—he my only friend in this country. I write to him several times, but he never answer me. At last, the other day, he write he can not come. Then I make up my mind. Father, in my house I have very good girl—servant girl. She go to Mass every morning; she keep my house well; she wash and cook for me nice and take good care for me since I be sick, — such good care as my dead wife would take for me if she be alive. Get license, and bring lawyer, and come marry me to Mary Doherty. First I marry her, then I make my will, and I leave most all my money to her.' I ask to see the girl. First she say no, she ashamed; she very good girl. At last I tell her she foolish, and then she say yes. I bring lawyer, I get license, we go there, I marry your brother to that girl. He make his will, and tell me to tell you. He leave to your brother, who is a priest in Italy, ten thou-

sand; he give me a nice little sum in my hand; he send something to the church, and five thousand to some orphan asylum; the rest he leave to his wife. I think your brother got maybe hundred and twenty-thousand, Mr. Poghi." For a minute I can not speak. At last I say: "He dead, Father,—he dead yet?" He say: "No, not when I come; but I expect pretty soon he die."

"After that the priest go away; for I can not talk with him,—I nearly die. Now what you think, Pietro, my brother do me that way?"

"Then I say: 'I think it serve you right, Mr. Poghi. I don't know when I hear any news that please me so much.'

"Then he go to strike me, but I go very quick out of his shop, and I not come back again. Pretty soon that story was print in the *Chronicle*, and everybody know it, and they all laugh at Giuseppe Poghi. But his brother not die for more than two year. He live in nice house in Los Angeles, with his wife; and have two big lots around, with flowers and lemon trees and oranges, and all kind nice vegetables in the back."

"The man really got what he deserved,

Pietro," I said. "But how did he arrive at such poverty as to be obliged to come here, to the Home?"

"I tell you, Missus. After a while Giuseppe Poghi he go to Mexico with his family. He most crazy when he find how rich his brother be. Some one tell him when he go to Guadalajara he get rich with drug store. But he not get rich there. Soon his wife die; then—he very bad man, very bad man, Missus—he run away with hotel-keeper's wife. She young Mexican woman. She think he got plenty money. He take pretty near all he got, and come to United States again. He try to live in New Orleans, but he very poor soon. That woman she run away from him too, so he keep getting worse and worse. He drink, he get rheumatism, he work for cook on boats, he come up here at last. He sick in Marine Hospital. They turn him out when he better. He can't work: he too feeble and sick and old. He got something they call chronic,—I think, I don't know just what. That good Italian priest over there at the Jesuit he see him, he get the Little Sisters to take him. That how he come here. God punish him, I think,

because he be so mean to his brother, and because he run away from his children. I not very sorry for Giuseppe Poghi,—not very sorry. But I sit with him; for he is only Italian here, and I know him long ago."

"And the poor children?" I said. "I suppose no one knows what became of them."

"I know all 'bout that," said Pietro, a new ring in his voice. "That is a very good part; that make person glad again. When Giuseppe Poghi is gone away to Mexico, and his brother be dead, I work in mine little while with Mike Doherty. He very nice young Irishman. After a while he find his sister; she Mrs. Poghi, that married with Giacomo. She buy him nice little ranch near Los Angeles. He bring out girl from Ireland and marry her. Some time I get tired working in mine, and I go to Los Angeles and work on ranch near by. Then I see Mike Doherty again, and his sister, Mrs. Poghi. She very nice woman. I work in her garden, two, three times. She nice, pretty too, dressed up, and go with all fine people she want to. She fine woman. I tell you what she do. When

Giuseppe Poghi he run away from his children, his oldest girl—she very nice—write to Giacomo Poghi's wife, and tell her if she will send them enough money to come back to California, they will work and pay her. What you think that woman do, Missus?"

"No doubt she sent the money."

"I bet you. She send for them children, and take them in her own house. She dress them up, and next fall the boy he go to Santa Clara College, and the girls to San José. Very fine schools, Missus; best in California. Then she go to Europe with them children. The boy he study violin there; make fine player. The girls they travelling with their aunt when I hear of them. Maybe they married now. I guess so. She got plenty money. But Giuseppe he not know that till I tell him. Maybe he sorry he not behave better, so he got some money too. Maybe he glad his children not so poor as he. Anyhow, he not try to find them, or tell them where he be. Well, I hope he not stay long in purgatory—not too long,—but I be afraid. Act very bad."

And, with sundry solemn shakes of the

head, Pietro prepared once more to light his pipe, which had gone out during the narrative.



XI.

THE FORTUNES OF M. CROQUELAIRE.

M. Croquelaire had been at the Old Men's Home nearly ten years when the event occurred which made such a change in his destiny. "Jerome," the Sisters called him; and with his intimates, when all were in a good humor, he was sometimes "Croquelaire"; but in general he wished to be, and was, addressed as Monsieur Croquelaire.

"M. J. Croquelaire," he would say,—
"that is my name, no less a gentleman that I am force to become the charge of the good Sisters. By them, for whom I keep in order the flower-garden, it is right that I should be address by my baptismal name; but by people in general, not at all. If on occasion, through having heard so much the good Sisters say 'Jerome,' Madame should now and then, either by preference or in absent mind, also address me in such manner, I should take it rather as

compliment. But for the others, no!"

He had come to poverty through varied misfortunes and errors of his own, not the least of which had been the habit of drinking, to which he had at one time been addicted. But for many years he had touched nothing but wine, which to a Frenchman is seldom intoxicating. He was, like the rest of his countrymen, a lover of strong coffee; and once privately complained to me that the beverage as presented to the old people at the Home was not of the best quality.

"Although how could one expect it," he continued, apologetically, "when the greater part, if not all, of it is obtained from hotels, who give to the good Sisters every day the refuse, the dregs! Clean, Madame, and not at all to injure the health, but very, very weak. To me, Madame, a cup of good coffee is equal to soup, of which we have an excellent quality. On Sunday a week we had a strange priest to say Mass. As is my custom, or rather I should say my charge, I took him his coffee.

"'No, no!' said he, with an Irish brogue very strong. 'Bring me a cup of *thé*, my good man.'

“The Sister then hastened to prepare a cup of *thé* for him; and while I waited she said:

“‘Jerome, drink the coffee yourself, and take with it a cracker. You will find one in the bin.’

“The coffee I drank. It was excellent. They have for visitors and the clergy a fine quality, *vous savez*, as is but right. But a cracker! *Mon Dieu*, with such a mouthful I would not spoil my coffee. *Un petit pain* now, that would have been acceptable; but a cracker—oh, no, no! And those Irish, what a strange people! How they have such passion for *thé*! But again Madame will understand it is not of the good Sisters I complain.”

Shortly after this he came to borrow a mowing machine, and I took advantage of the occasion to make him a cup of strong coffee. He pronounced it excellent and added:

“But how could it be otherwise, made by the little hands of Madame herself, which I have often admired, as it is the privilege of all to have approbation of beauty where it exists? Again the excellent, superfine quality of Mocha, or per-

haps Java and Mocha blend; the quick accomplishment; the drinking on the moment; the rich, yellow cream, produced by the Jersey cow in that little field I can see through the window. (That cow, Madame, if Monsieur would sell, would bring any day one hundred dollar and twenty-five.) The sparkle lumps of sugar; the large china cup with flowers thereon. (Does Madame paint? No? Well, they do such paint like that nowadays very well in the stores.) The beautiful shape and heavy quality silver spoon,—that all have much to do. Is it not so, Madame?"

Finally he rose to go, but there seemed to be a reluctance in his manner.

"Will you not take another cup, Monsieur?" I asked (he had already disposed of two). But he quickly responded:

"No, Madame. Thanks, thanks! I have had all sufficient. The cup it was very large, and the coffee most excellent, as I have said. I was only thinking—you will smile, Madame,—that in my country we are a frugal people. There is a custom, when one goes to take coffee in a restaurant—not, of course, as now, in a private family where one is invited, but where one

pays,—there is a custom, as I said, to take very simply the remaining lumps of sugar, if one has not used all with the coffee, and put them in the pocket, for a *bonne bouche*, or the bird at home, or even the little ones. It is understood, Madame, that one does so. It was merely a recollection that came to me.”

I hastened to empty what was left of the sugar in his capacious pocket. The old man blushed, and faintly struggled as he said:

“Thanks, thanks, Madame! But this is too much goodness of you. I beg you will not think that I was—what you call?—hinting for these sugar. But yes: I will not deny it. I have a sweet tooth. Ha! ha! I have but five altogether. To nibble at a lump of sugar is to me pleasant; and a little glass of *eau sucre* in the afternoons. that I like.”

A sudden stroke of good fortune changed the aspects of life for the old Frenchman. One day news came that a legacy of twelve thousand francs was awaiting him; the bequest of a nephew in Paris, to whom he had once been kind, and to whom the approach of death had brought welcome,

if tardy, recognition of past benefactions. There was great rejoicing among the old people, with whom M. Croquelaire was a great favorite. I hastened to offer my congratulations. The old man bore his new honors modestly, yet with a certain dignity that comported well with his six-and-seventy years. After some slight conversation, he looked at me in a half-quizzical, half-shamefaced manner, as he said:

"Madame, perhaps you have not heard that I am about to leave the good Sisters and make my own home?"

"But, Monsieur Croquelaire, you are so old, you will not be able to manage alone."

"Madame, it is to marry."

"At your age?"

He drew himself up with dignity.

"I am already promised."

"Oh, it is an old engagement, then!" I replied, scarcely able to repress a smile.

"No, Madame. Last week I have said to the good Mother that I wish to speak with her. I have thank her for all her kindness to me, and I have said that no longer is it necessary I live on charity. This is for me not now the place. For three hundred dollar I will buy that small

cottage of Patrick Burns, who is now dead, and who have lease of ground for ten years still, at five dollar the year. Then I can grow my flowers and vegetable, and keep chicken and my cow, and it may be some pigs. When I have buy everything, and have furnish my house, new and clean, I have still left maybe nearly two thousand dollar. I divide in four-hundred-dollar parts. That last for five years, and on that I can live. After five years I die. I be eighty-one years old."

"But if you should not die, and your money should all be gone? You know it is a rule with the Little Sisters not to receive again any one who has left them."

"Sometime they break that rule," said M. Croquelaire, with great confidence. "They have take back that cross Mr. Mahoney, who was here but two years, and grumble all the time. Now he is good and happy. They have take back James Smith, when he have been turn out on the street by his son because he have fall and break his leg, and can no longer carry the water for the road-makers. I have meself met on the street, very poor, that old woman who so much quarrel with the

others. I know not how they call her, but she is dirty and have only one eye; and yesterday they have take her back, for I have seen her come down from an express with her feather-bed again."

"But if they should not take you back, what then?"

"Then I would go to another place, where they do not know me, and go into some other house of the good Sisters."

"They might ask whether you had ever been in any of their Homes before."

"Then I would say, making like very sad and angry: 'O my good Sister, do you think that if once in the Home of the Old People, I would go out again?'"

"But that would be equivalent to a lie."

M. Croquelaire shrugged his shoulders in that expressive manner peculiar to a Frenchman, as he replied:

"Sometimes, Madame, it can not be help."

I was silent. After a brief pause he resumed, and his face was very grave:

"Madame, I must have some time of liberty again; some time to feel I am my own master, even if at the end I must go to the county—what you call?—the poor-house. And I want some good

woman to make happy with me, and cook my meals and keep my house clean. I have promise of Jessamy Traber, and next Sunday we marry."

My face bore witness to my surprise at this news. M. Croquelaire laughed.

"Madame," he said, "I see my news make you surprise. I have said to Sister Emilia I have choose two: the little Irish-woman so clean, so clean, who take care of flowers in the women's garden with Jessamy Traber; that nice, quiet Helen, who always been old maid. But Sister Emilia will not ask for me. Then I have written letter to Helen, and good Mother she have read it to her; and Helen have been mad; she have cried. I have been sorry for that afterward. Yesterday I have asked Jessamy herself when we ride in the wagon to the dentist, and she say 'Yes' right off. First good Mother have been a little mad, then she have laughed; but she say she never take us back again. To-night I leave; I buy everything and fix up my house."

"And why not?" said Jessamy, in reply to my question as to whether the news was really true. "It seems to me that I am

called. I have no prejudice against the French as a nation, nor against individuals; and for M. Croquelaire I have always entertained a most profound respect. He is, in every sense of the word, a gentleman. We are both, in a certain sense, superior to the class among which it has pleased a gracious Providence to have placed us, it may have been for the purpose of bringing us together as now contemplated. I have often been struck by the strong likeness which the profile of my future husband bears to that of the first Napoleon. My own resemblance to her gracious Majesty the Queen of England has been so often commented upon that it is superfluous to mention it. That in itself is a coincidence. I shall consider it a privilege to render his declining days more happy than they might otherwise be. I feel myself greatly honored by the preference of so exemplary and amiable a man. The good Mother was at first disposed to argue against the proposed union between myself and M. Croquelaire—or Jerome, as I shall call him hereafter. But she had no tenable grounds; and, angel that she is, so yielded gracefully. I have a box of excellent clothing stored at a

commission house, with directions for disposition after my death, should such occur suddenly. It was my intention to bequeath it to the Little Sisters. In the meantime I have taken occasion of visits to the city to take some necessary articles of wearing apparel therefrom, not wishing to be dependent upon the good Sisters for clothing as well as food and shelter. I shall now find it useful, and feel to a certain extent, as is becoming, independent of my future husband as to wedding garments, although not doubting his willingness to provide all things needful."

Who could gainsay her?

They were married the following Sunday. The union lasted three years. Happy as two little children, they were constant visitors at the Home, to which they never came empty-handed. Their garden was the pride of the neighborhood, producing the finest vegetables in great abundance. Their wealthy neighbors paid fancy prices for the crisp radishes and early lettuce of M. Croquelaire; not to mention young onions, early peas, succulent string-beans, and tender asparagus, which M. Croquelaire was wont to describe as "a dream."

They had quite a nice little income from the milk of their cow, and Jessamy's chickens were always in demand. So well did they husband their resources that when M. Croquelaire died—with one hand in Jessamy's, the other in that of the good Mother, from whom he had obtained a promise to receive his wife at the Home for the Aged whenever that dear woman wished,—the principal of the legacy, minus the original outlay, had been augmented by two hundred dollars.

A year later Madame Croquelaire was stricken with inflammatory rheumatism, which carried her off after six months of intense but patient suffering. She was forced to go, much against her will, to the Hospital of the Sisters of St. Francis, while her soul longed for her old home.

When her will was opened, all accounts being settled, as provided for—viz., board, attendance, physician's bills, and funeral expenses, not forgetting a sum set apart for Masses for herself and her husband, the Little Sisters of the Poor found themselves richer by a thousand dollars.

XII.

JESSAMY TRABER.

Jessamy was a short, stout, red - faced little Englishwoman, who had come to the Home when her failing eyes would no longer permit her to continue the small infant school she had kept for many years. Her pupils seldom numbered more than ten, and it had long been a mystery to those who knew her how she had contrived to live with so precarious an income. But Jessamy had seen better days. Her wardrobe was ample, and her resources for making both ends meet were almost inexhaustible. It was, moreover, no secret among the parents of the children who imbibed their first draughts of learning at her feet, that Mrs. Traber was not above receiving sundry gifts of tea, coffee, and sugar from those whom she knew to be her friends; not to speak of luxuries which as quietly found their way to her tiny corner cupboard.

When at last she felt herself obliged to give up teaching, her native independence revolted at becoming an inmate of a charitable institution. But, the first step taken, she became reconciled, accepting the inevitable with Christian resignation. Neither she nor the good Sisters who received her under their hospitable roof ever had reason to regret her coming. Always busy in household tasks or attending to the garden there was no happier old woman at the Home than Jessamy Traber.

She was an incessant talker, very proud of her English birth, and not a little exalted over the conviction she firmly held that she bore a strong resemblance to Queen Victoria. She was fond of repeating an anecdote on the subject, which every new acquaintance usually heard at the first interview. Allusion to this real or fancied resemblance more than once provoked the ire of certain among the patriotic and somewhat touchy Irish companions of our equally loyal Englishwoman. It was on one of these occasions that I heard Jessamy's story, which I found so interesting that I have thought it worthy of repetition in these humble but faithful chronicles.

As I passed into the women's large and beautiful garden one feast-day afternoon, they were sitting about in groups, or walking up and down the soft paths, covered with tan bark. I soon perceived that something was amiss with a trio nearest me. Jessamy held her head aloft, her cheeks more flushed than usual, her lip trembling with scorn. In front of her, arm in arm, stood Katie Magevney, aged eighty-six and blind, and Bessie O'Farrell, a cripple, bent nearly double with rheumatism; but at this moment she was waving her stick violently in the air, regardless of consequences.

"Down with Victoria, and Ireland forever!" she shouted, with all the strength of her tremulous old voice.

"More power to you, Bess, and three times three for the green!" quavered her blind companion, in tones still more feeble.

"What is the trouble?" I asked, joining the excited group.

"I did but relate an occurrence that took place in my youth at Richmond, near London," Jessamy replied, "when these old ladies took offence at my few simple remarks."

"'Twas that same old story of herself and Queen Victoria she was striving to tell us," rejoined the blind woman; "and myself and Bess here both said at once: 'Sure we're tired hearing that same old tale of Queen Victoria. Faith, that wouldn't be a true Irishwoman whose blood wouldn't boil at the mention of the name of that old skinflint.'"

"And *I* said," chimed in Bess, "that 'twas well known she sent but a five-pound note over to Ireland in the famine of '49. 'Tis myself would have sent that back,' says I. And with that Jessamy drew down a reflection on dynamiting. "'Tis too good for them,—that's what it is,' says I. 'And what justice could Ireland expect from a Queen that gives her old Indian shawls as wedding presents to the nobility? My niece read the words on a paper the last time I was in town.'"

"And I replied," said Jessamy, speaking for the first time, slowly and with great dignity, "that, greatly as I admired the Irish people for their many virtues, admitting that they had been wronged by the English as a nation, I could not but think that much of their ill-condition was

due to themselves; they are so inflammable and irascible—”

“’Twas that angered us *entirely!*” exclaimed Bess. “Sorra one of me knows the meaning of the words, but I’ll engage they’re no compliment.”

“Jessamy darling,” said her companion, ironically, as the two hobbled off together, “you’re a good woman, but too well learned for the likes of us, thanks to the cruel English laws that left us trusting to the hedge-schoolmaster.”

With their passage Jessamy’s usual good-humor instantly returned.

“Poor creatures!” she said. “They are old and ignorant. I should not let their momentary displeasure disturb me,—for it will be but momentary. When we meet at supper all will be serene. And while I can not help but be proud of my resemblance to that gracious sovereign, devoted mother, and most exemplary woman in every relation of life, Victoria, Queen of England and Empress of India, as she now is by the grace of God, it was far from my thoughts to brew this tempest in a teapot. My husband was an Irishman. I bear no ill-will to the Irish, either as a nation or as

individuals. It was through him indirectly, and more directly through a domestic whom I afterward employed, that I first learned to appreciate the truths of Catholicity. No one can more heartily admire the faith of the Irish people, kept pure and fervent under long-enduring and terrible persecutions."

After I had expressed acquiescence in these sentiments, we remained for a time in silence. Jessamy's eyes looked reminiscent. Finally she said:

"My story might perhaps be of interest to a thoughtful and religious person like yourself. It does not abound in startling incidents, but it is, in my opinion, a wonderful illustration of the providence of God, whose fostering care responds to every act of ours from the cradle to the grave. As a starting-point I will say (so that as I progress in my narrative you may be able to draw rational conclusions from my premises) that the motto of my whole life has been always to aim at the best and highest. My father was a maker and letterer of grave-stones in the town of Bristol. His workshop and yard were overlooked by the Dissenting chapel, which

we attended. He was a severe man, but a good Christian, according to his lights. We were a large family—ten in number, all girls,—the poor man's riches. For the sum of twenty pounds a year we were instructed in the necessary branches of education by a daily governess, a Miss Rachel Arlsbag Powler, a severe, strait-laced, but sincerely and truly virtuous woman; like my father and mother, a devout attendant of the Dissenting chapel. From her teachings I acquired a horror of all things pertaining to the Catholic religion. Poor woman! I believe she was sincere in her belief that it was an institution of the devil. So she had been taught from her infancy. With bated breath I would hurry past the little Catholic chapel on the outskirts of the town, in the neighborhood of which we resided. Meeting a priest, I would have looked for the cloven foot, had I not been afraid to pause in my flight. All this was sixty years ago and more. Since that time there has been a great revival of all things Catholic in England.

“When I was twenty a young Irishman came to work with my father. Handsome as a picture was he, with a gay sparkle

in his blue eye that did not well conform with the principles he professed—those of the most pronounced Methodism. He remained in the employ of my father five years. During that time we were married. After two years of happiness, my husband fell ill of lung trouble, contracted through having taken a severe cold, and the doctor pronounced the disease quick consumption. On hearing this, he turned his face to the wall, uttering loud groans.

“‘There is no hope for me in this world or the next,’ he said.

“Thinking this despondency and despair due to his feeble condition, I bade him not give up so utterly, but implored him to take heart, and appeal to Him who could cure both body and soul. Two days passed, during which he lay almost silent. You can imagine my surprise when he said to me on the third morning:

“‘Jessamy, I have been a hypocrite. I doubt whether there is pardon for me. I am a dying man, and wish to see a clergyman—’

“I interrupted him, saying:

“‘My dear Patrick, I will send at once for the Rev. Jeremiah Swalls, to whose

teachings you have so long lent a willing ear, and by whose preaching you have profited so well.'

"Patrick sat up in bed, holding out imploring hands.

"'Jessamy,' he cried, 'I want a priest, a priest,—a Catholic priest! I am a Catholic; and, if God can forgive me the damnable hypocrisy under which I have lived so long, a Catholic I wish to die.'

"I thought him mad, and summoned my father. He also believed him to be raving. But my husband persisted in his assertion, till, filled with horror though I was, my wifely love and duty conquering all else, I ventured to say to him:

"'Patrick, a priest shall be called.'

"At this my father cried out:

"'Under my roof a Catholic priest shall never stand! Across my threshold that first-born of Satan shall not pass!'

"'Tis what I deserve, only what I deserve,' said my husband. 'A traitor and hypocrite I have lived, so should I be left to die.' So saying he burst forth into weeping.

"'Father,' I said, 'will you not take back your words?'

"'Never, never, never!' was the reply.

"'Then,' said I, taking my husband's hands in mine, dropping tears upon them as I spoke, 'forth from your house we go this day. Somewhere we shall find cover and shelter. Deluded Patrick may be, but mad he is not. A priest he shall have, and I myself shall summon him.'

"'Go—go at once!' shouted my father, now furious. 'And never again set foot within this house!'

"With that he rushed frantically down the stairs, and out to the street, where he strode up and down as one demented.

"After soothing my husband into a calmer mood, and meeting quietly all the arguments by which he now strove to dissuade me from my resolve to remove him where he could see a priest—which were as air to me, as he was my first thought, and that he should die in the faith that seemed to him best was my most earnest wish and purpose,—I went out into the town to seek a lodging.

"As I hurried along, although agitated by the horror of learning that my husband was one of the pariahs whom I had been

taught to hate, that horror was not the uppermost emotion in my troubled mind. No: it was the fear that he might die without having made what seemed to him to be reparation for his sin. I soon secured a lodging, and removed him that evening. Father, mother and sisters kept aloof from us, as though we were victims of a loathsome disease. I heard loud praying in the parlor as we descended the stairs.

“As soon as I had settled my husband comfortably in our new abode, I went in search of a priest. My knees trembled when I accosted him, but the kind old man was not aware of it. He came next morning, and every day for a month, until the end. So prejudiced against everything Catholic was I that I said to my husband before the first visit of the priest:

“‘Patrick, in all which can help you to die in that way which you consider best I will do my utmost. But do not speak to me of aught that may pass between you the priest; for to my mind he is but an emissary of the Evil One.’

“My husband faithfully abstained from saying one word on the obnoxious subject. To this day I know not how or why he had

temporarily abandoned and denied the faith of his fathers. The priest came and went without a word from me save a curt salutation. There was an Irish servant in the house, a maid-of-all-work—in other words, a slave. She it was who at the last made ready the Sacred Table for the holy Repast, the mention of which horrified and scandalized me. It was this alien and stranger that prepared Patrick for the reception of his Lord; while I, his wife, lay groaning on my face and hands in the adjoining chamber, dominated by the stubbornness and perverseness of the Evil One. When told by Mary McEllyott that all things necessary had been done—I mean as far as went the performance of priestly rites, I lay in wait for the Father at the foot of the stairs.

“‘Sir,’ I said, ‘I thank you for your fidelity to what, I doubt not, seems to you to be your duty with regard to the spiritual needs of my husband. But, if all things requisite have been attended to, I beseech you come no more. Leave him to me in his last hours.’

“‘The good priest looked at me kindly as he answered:

“‘It shall be as you wish. God has been good to your husband, and He will reward you for the great sacrifice you have made. His blessing be upon you.’ At these words a gentler feeling crept into my soul. It was the first working of God’s grace.

“When Patrick died, which was the next day, the Irish slave and myself attended him to the grave. It was a very humble one, in the corner of the Catholic churchyard. My father sent me two hundred pounds, which, he wrote, was my rightful portion, and which I received as such. Neither relative nor friend came to visit me, though the Rev. Jeremiah Swalls wrote me an angry and reproachful letter. Thus my heart was steeled against my own people, who had so lamentably failed in the Christian faith and charity of which they professed to be exponents and shining lights, and I went no more to chapel.

“Not being able to bear the scorn and contumely following upon my changed fortune, I went up to London. There I opened a small school for young children. The landlady of the house, which was filled with lodgers, made miserable the

life of her servant,—this time an English girl, and, as I soon found, a Catholic. In that cheerless abode, her daily toil sufficient for three able-bodied women, her wages a pittance, the abuse of her mistress a martyrdom on earth, she led the life of a saint. There was a Catholic chapel around the corner. I soon learned that she went there at five o'clock every morning to Mass. Midnight seldom found her in bed, but never was dawn so bleak or cold that it did not see her keeping that sweet tryst with her God! Her sweetness, patience, and piety, I could not but admire.

“One night I heard her mistress accusing her of going forth at the early morning hour for evil purposes, anathematizing all things Catholic as outcomes of deviltry. That night I lay long sleepless; for the occurrence had opened old wounds of my own. I arose in the early morning and followed Anastasia, determined to learn for myself what were the orgies held—according to my landlady, under the name of religion—every day at this most unearthly hour. I saw a small, dingy building, surmounted by a cross. I entered. All was dark inside, save that portion of

the chapel within the radius of the two candles on the altar. Close to the sanctuary steps knelt a group of perhaps a dozen men and women. Three or four of the latter advanced to receive Holy Communion, among them Anastasia. As the priest approached the communicants, I recognized the old man who had visited my husband in Bristol.

“Oh, say not that between this world and the other there is no connecting link,—that those who have gone before are not solicitous for the dear ones still left on earth to work out their salvation! This is what happened to me. At the moment I became aware of the identity of the priest I cried aloud: ‘Patrick, pray for me!’ And then inaudibly to myself: ‘Lord, help Thou my unbelief!’ I wanted nothing more: then and there I became a Catholic.

“After Mass was over I went to the sacristy. There was no fear, no trembling, no hesitation,—naught but eagerness to learn. Books good Father T—— gave me, and instructions manifold; but all my doubts vanished from that hour.

“Shortly after my baptism I came to America, accompanied by Anastasia, who

lived in my service until she died, eight years ago. I will not weary you with the story of the privations that brought me where I am. But this much will I say: sorrow and sickness and anxieties and poverty have I known, but never have I been otherwise than resigned to them; for I have always been mindful of the great gifts vouchsafed me by Almighty God. To have been granted such favors as are known only to those who enjoy the blessing of living in the bosom of the Catholic Church makes toil a pleasure, poverty easy to bear, and even the bread of charity palatable and sweet."

During this recital the face of the old woman had undergone a complete change, becoming illumined, spiritualized I might say, by the revelation of the soul within. The ordinary somewhat gross redness of her cheeks had given way to a pallor which idealized her usually homely countenance; her eyes swam in a tender mistiness of unshed tears. Truly, thought I, the saints are with us always in our daily paths, and we, unconscious, brush them by.

We sat a few moments longer, in a sym-

pathetic silence which both understood, and which I was loath to be the first to break. Finally, as if struck by a sudden thought, Jessamy came back to the hour and its realities once more. Putting her hand in the capacious pocket she always wore attached to her waist, she said:

“Well, it *was* too bad that I should have unwittingly offended those two poor feeble creatures as I did. It *is* unwise—and I shall try in future to remember it—ever to touch on any subject relating to England or the royal family with a certain class of Irish. But I have a few pinches of excellent snuff in my pocket; and, asking you to excuse me, I will take it to them. I trust my story has not wearied you, and that you at least will believe I bear no ill-will to a race who have been the missionaries of the world.”

With these words, and the desired permission, Jessamy trotted off to make her peace with the indignant twain. An hour later, as I entered the chapel for Benediction, I saw them sitting side by side on the last bench, each devoutly saying her Rosary.

XIII.

THE STORY OF A CURSE.

Mrs. Vaughan had been at the Home many years, although she was even now much younger than the majority of her companions. Rheumatism, that enemy of poverty and toil, had early crippled her hands and feet; and a kind benefactor of the Little Sisters had sent her to them almost in spite of their protestations that a hospital for incurables was the proper place for one so afflicted. They had never regretted having received the good creature; for she had a sunshiny nature that diffused its cheerfulness over all with whom she came in contact. Among other pious customs she had one of saying the Rosary every day for some intention of her own or others. So well was this known, and so great the confidence which existed in the efficacy of her prayers, that among the inmates, the Little Sisters included, she often had her "intentions" bespoken days in advance.

It was therefore in a gently rallying spirit that I remarked one evening after Benediction, as I took a seat beside her on the porch:

“Well, Mrs. Vaughan, how is your rheumatism, and for whom are you saying your beads today?”

“The rheumatism is the same as always, ma’am,” she said, “unpleasant company; but one can get used to that in time too, if one doesn’t be complaining and fretting. And as for the beads, I’m after finishing them for the soul of one who died this day ten years; though God in heaven grant he’s won there long before now. ’Tis a strange tale. I’ll never get over pondering on it while I live. You’d scarce believe me if I’d tell it to you, ma’am.”

“There is nothing you could tell me that I would not believe, Mrs. Vaughan,” I said, taking her hand in mine; “for I know nothing could induce you to relate that which you believed to be untrue.”

“Thank you for that same, ma’am,” she replied, simply; adding after a moment of reflection: “Sure there’ll be no harm, as long as I don’t give names.”

After having replaced her beads in her

pocket, she drew from her bosom a little chamois case, and took from it a small silver cross, which she pressed to her lips.

"Kiss that, ma'am," she said. "'Tis a great relic—a bit of the True Cross, that my poor father prized above all he owned. It's often I heard him tell of it; but I never saw it till it came into my hands ten years back, long after he was dead and buried."

I reverently kissed the relic, as I had no doubt of the accuracy of her assertion.

"They talk of miracles," she went on. "Some doubt them and some believe in them. What I'm going to say of the way that cross came back to me again is strange, if it isn't a miracle. God had a hand in it, any way. I'd best begin in the middle of my story, ma'am, the better to explain it all to you. When I first came to the Little Sisters I wasn't so bad at all as I am now,—not such a burthensome, awkward creature; yet bad enough, God knows. It's often in those days the good Mother gave me leave to spend a Monday with an old friend in the West End, and I always went in the wagon—'twas easier than the street-cars,—and they'd call for me in the evening after

they'd made the rounds of collecting the cold victuals and coffee, and so on. One morning there sat a strange man beside Tom Tierney, who drove in those times. He was—the strange man, not Tom—of a strong build, with black, piercing eyes, and a long, grey beard. But after I'd looked at him a while I saw, from the trembling of his hands and the twitching of his lips, that he wasn't as strong as he looked. He was seventy-five, any way.

“‘You're a newcomer,’ says I, after a bit, thinking to break the quiet; for, though Tom Tierney had enough talk in him, the stranger was very gloomy.

“‘Yes,’ says he; then, civil enough, and looking at me very sharp: ‘And, by your speech, you're a Cork woman.’

“‘I am,’ says I, ‘and proud of it, too.’

“‘With that he turned away his head, and hadn't a word for a good while. Something in his manner made me sure he was of good education, and I couldn't bring myself to joke or make any more freedom. I disremember now how it came about, but Tom and I got talking of curses. I think 'twas Tom drew it down. He said

he hadn't any fear of any one's curse; God didn't mind those things at all.

"'Well,' says I, just as I'm telling the tale to you now, ma'am, 'I know a story of a curse that was the ruin of those it was called down on.'

"'And who were they?' asked Tom.

"'My own father and my own family,' says I.

"'The man on the front seat turned about—I mind it well, his eyes were so piercing,—and says he:

"'Who was your father, and where did he live?'

"'His name was Terence Doherty, of the parish of —, near Youghal.'

"'Ah!' says he, facing round again, and drawing in his lips for all the world as if he'd a mind to whistle, and then thought better of it. 'Twas the last word he spoke on the road—or as far as I went on it, anyhow.

"'Go on with your story,' says Tom.

"'I will,' says I. 'And I'll have you know, Tom, at the start, that there's not an evil or a hard wish in my heart against the one that drew down that curse upon us; for, through poverty and exile, my

father never so much as lifted an eyebrow in the way of revenge. He'd always be saying 'twas only a way God had of trying our souls to see would we win heaven, and maybe to punish his own hard-headedness in the trifle of a bit of land.'

“‘Oyeh! go on with your story,’ says Tom again.

“‘Well, I will,’ says I; and with that I made a fresh start.

“We were an old family in the place. Decent, respectable farmers were the Dohertys from all time that any one remembers. The parish priest was Father Neville, a great man of improvements, but not equal to a word of contradiction. My father had a bit of land adjoining the graveyard, and Father Neville took it into his head that it was needed, as the burying-ground was filling up very fast. He asked my father what would he give it for, and my father said he wouldn't sell it. The priest got angry—he was a very hard man in his temper, as I told you before,—and then he said my father should let him have it, whether or no. They grew hot with each other, and the longer they talked the worse they got. So it went on, till there

was two sides in the parish in regard of it,—one taking part with the priest, and the other with my father. Finally they met of a day on the road, and after some words the priest raised his stick. My father took it from him, broke it in two pieces, flung it into the field and walked away, the priest roaring after him.

“That night my father was very quiet and lonesome in the house: my mother couldn't get a word out of him. ‘Terence,’ says she (I've often heard the both of them tell it), ‘if it's in regard to the bit of meadow you're fretting, give it to his Reverence. Sure it can bring us no luck to be opposing the anointed of God.’ My father sat with his head in his hands, and made her no answer. The children were in bed, and all was quiet in the house at the time. Suddenly there came a knock at the door. My mother opened it, and who should be in it but Father Neville himself, and he raging mad! ‘Will you let me have the bit of land?’ says he. ‘Say yes, or I'll curse you and yours.’—‘I will not, your Reverence,’ says my father, straightening himself and standing up to him; ‘though but a moment ago, before you

came in, I was considering it. 'Tis my own land, and I'll keep it, curse or no curse.'

“With that the priest walked over to the wall where the relic was always kept hanging up in a little bit of a glass box. He took down the box, opened it, and held up the relic cross in his hand. ‘Who gave you this?’ he asked my father,—‘You know well, your Reverence,’ says he, ‘that my grandfather got it from the Bishop of Cork, who was a distant relative; and he got it from the Pope.’—‘So I’ve heard and so I believe,’ says the priest. ‘Under this roof may it never rest again till you prove yourself worthy to possess it.’ With these words he put it in his pocket and walked out of the house. But as he was closing the door he turned about, and says he: ‘You’ll have crosses enough before you die without this one,—take my word for it. May you and your wife and your children be wanderers on the earth from this time forward!’

“I often wondered my father and mother let him take away the relic as they did; but they were very gentle, kindly-people, and wouldn’t lift a hand that way;

especially as my father was sore and ashamed and surprised at himself concerning what had happened that afternoon on the roadside. Said my father once and he telling it to myself: 'I misdoubted then, and I do still, was I indeed worthy to possess it. I misdoubted then, and will till I die, was I right or wrong in the stand I took against selling the bit of land; but, anyway, in those days I thought I was right.'

"The trouble broke my mother's heart. We couldn't stay in the parish after that. Some called the priest a black-hearted man—God forgive them!—and told my father to go to the Bishop, but he shook his head. He gave up the farm shortly—sold his lease, that is,—and, with the money from that and what he had in the bank, emigrated to America with seven of the children. He left two of us behind with the grandmother in Fermoy. I was a grown woman when I came out. Ill luck followed us all wherever we went,—ill luck and poverty and sickness, and misfortune and death. My father wouldn't be long in any place, and he beginning to do well, but he'd grow restless, and

pick up everything and make a new start. He thought himself 'twas the curse working against him; but I'm inclined to believe 'twas the *fear of the curse* that made him unsettled in his mind, and always on the go. I'm thinking he blamed himself a good deal for what he had done. Whether he did as he should or made a mistake, he was a good Christian, and a kind, uncomplaining man till the day of his departure."

Here I interrupted her by saying:

"I must confess that my sympathies are altogether with your poor father. The land was his to keep or dispose of as he chose. It would have been a kind thing to have given it to the priest, or to have sold it to him; but I could never believe but that a malediction so unjust must have rested in some way on the one who conceived and uttered it."

Mrs. Vaughan looked up quickly.

"That part of it isn't told yet, ma'am," she said. "And that's the strange part entirely. When I reached my journey's end I got down from the wagon, and went in and spent the day with my friend. That evening and we coming home in the

cool, the strange man, sitting to the front as before, hadn't a word out of him. When we came near home, and it quite dusky, he turned on me of a sudden, and says he, in a queer voice:

"That was a sad story you told us this morning. Would you know that relic if you saw it?"

"And how would I know it,' says I, 'and I but a child in arms when 'twas taken from my father?"

"What happened to that priest?' he asked. 'Did you ever hear?"

"No,' says I. 'But I hope to the Almighty that nothing ontoward happened him.'

"If he's not in hell, he deserves to be there this minute,' said the strange man, in the same husky voice.

"God forgive you, honest man,' says myself, 'for your hard judgment and making the blood to run cold in my veins! Are you an Irishman at all, and not to know the regard the Irish have for their priests, good or bad, fearing to go against them even in a just cause? And are you an Irishman at all, at all, not to have learned at your mother's knee to forgive your

enemies and pray for them every day of your life?

“What did he do but lean over to me in the wagon, and says he :

“‘You’re a good woman, a good woman; and well I know if that monster is living today, and will ever see the face of God, ’tis through your prayers and those of your poor father and mother.’

“That’s as well as I can remember it, ma’am; for I was greatly frightened. After that not one of the three of us ever opened our lips till we got home. I’m a quiet woman, ma’am—and I believe I was still quieter then than I’m now,—and I never said a word to any one of what happened. But I watched that man in the chapel, and I noticed that he never went to the Sacraments. So I misgave that he mustn’t be a Catholic at all.

“One day I was out sunning myself, and I saw him walking toward me, on the other side of the palings. He stopped before me.

“‘You wouldn’t know that relic?’ says he, fierce like.

“‘It’s a shame for you to make sport of me in so serious a matter,’ says I. ‘It’s a queer man you are altogether.’

"'I know that,' says he; 'but I'm not making sport of you. Trust me, you'll have it yet, and it won't be very long.' And before I could say a word he walked away. I gave him up then for crazy out and out. Shortly after I missed him from the chapel two or three mornings. Maybe it was in a week's time, not longer, that the good Mother called me one morning, and said she :

"'Mrs. Vaughan, did you ever know Mr. Blake before he came here?'

"'And who is he at all, good Mother!'

"'You didn't know him, then?' says she, describing the strange man.

"'I never laid eyes on him till he went in with Tom Tierney and myself one day in the wagon.'

"'He's dead,' says she; 'and he told me to give you this,'—putting an envelope in my hand. 'And he told me to tell you that it went about the world with him since ever he took it from the wall of your father's house, forty years ago. Maybe you'll know what that means. I do not.'

"'I fell on my knees. 'O good Mother, good Mother!' says I. 'Did he make his peace with God?'

“‘He did,’ says she. ‘Father Brown was with him a long time both yesterday and the day before. He cried the whole night long. His death was most edifying.’

“‘Praise be to God and His Holy Mother for that!’ says I; ‘and may heaven be his portion soon!’

“‘When I looked up she was wiping her eyes.

“‘Did you have a suspicion he was ever a priest, good Mother?’ says I.

“‘I knew he was.’

“‘And what was it drew him to this pass?’ says I.

“‘I think it was drink and his roving disposition and his own pride,’ says she.

“‘And that’s how I got my relic of the True Cross, ma’am. Oh, but God is mindful of the sinner, no matter how deep and dark the sin! And what were my poor father’s troubles to his?—God be merciful to him!’”

“‘Amen!’” I answered from the bottom of my heart, with a thrill of joy, not unmixed with pride, that in my veins also flowed some of that Irish blood which, running the world’s arteries up and down, is surely an element in its sanctification.

XIV.

AN OLD MAN'S SORROW.

He was a morose old man. Neither sunshine nor holidays seemed to warm his spirits. He was accustomed to sit, silent and alone, in a corner he had appropriated to himself in the smoking-room, which came to be known among the other old men as "Doherty's corner." Although I had often seen him with a rosary in his hand, Sister Emilia once told me he never approached the holy Sacraments. In spite of his grim reserve, I had always felt a great compassion for the poor old man; and, though he invariably met my overtures with curt monosyllables, I still persevered. Gradually his manner began to thaw, till one day as my little girl skipped before me down the path where he was slowly walking, I fancied he looked at her wistfully. The child also must have been attracted by something in his glance; for, pausing in front of him, she said, artlessly:

“Do you like little girls?”

A smile flitted across his stern features, lighting them up in such a way as to change his whole expression; causing one to feel that the glow of love and kindness had once had a lodgment there. I was still further surprised when he laid his wrinkled, toil-worn hand on her head, as he answered, with a tremor in his voice:

“I did once, *avourneen*; and there's times when maybe I do still.” And, turning to me, he said, sadly and bitterly, as he stretched forth his large, knotted hands: “These worked hard, hard, ma'am, for many a year to make a lady of a girl like that.” Then, looking about him wildly, taking in with one wide, comprehensive sweep of his arms his whole surroundings, he added: “And here is where she left me!”

With these words he passed on. My sympathies were very strongly roused. After that day I lost no opportunity of saying a few kindly words to the old man, and not without good effect. He would often unbend sufficiently to talk about the weather, the Irish Question—he was an ardent Home Ruler,—and to express his

fears as to whether "the new Pope," but just elected, "might not give in to them murdering Italians,—bad luck to the whole of them from Garibaldi down!" From this and similar remarks I knew that his was the strong faith characteristic of the Irish, albeit his heart had been warped and he had long neglected the practice of his religious duties. Therefore, I was not surprised one morning after a retreat which had been given to the old people by a fervent and gentle Jesuit Father, to meet him in his accustomed walk, with a new elasticity in his step, and a softer light in his steel-grey eyes.

"Good-morning, ma'am!" he said, cheerfully. "'Tis a pleasant day that's in it."

"Very," I said. "And you look unusually cheerful this morning, Mr. Doherty."

He leaned upon his stick, looked at me gravely, and said, with deliberation:

"I went to confession the day before yesterday, ma'am, and I'm feeling the good of it yet, thanks and praise be to God!"

"I am glad to hear that," I replied. "Sometimes a little thing will keep one

away; the longer one remains aloof, the harder it is to go, until one day the grace of God conquers, and all is right again."

"'Twasn't a little thing kept *me* away, ma'am," he said, with a tightening of the lips which showed his heart was still very sore. "But when I think of the goodness of God in every way, and all He suffered for the like of me—a thing I long forgot in my anger, but which the good Father put into my mind again with his sermons,—I can bring myself to forgive—yes, and forget all, all!"

A mighty sigh followed this speech; the hand that held the cane trembled violently. My heart ached for the poor man, burthened as he seemed to be with some great wrong or poignant sorrow.

"Sit down on that bench behind you and rest," I said; "and try not to think or speak about that which has caused you so much unhappiness."

He sat down as I bade him, looking steadfastly up at me while he said:

"Not to think about it, ma'am, would not be possible as long as I have my mind and memory left. But not to speak of it would be easy enough; for I've kept it

in my heart so long and so close that it seems like digging a corpse from the grave to raise it. And yet I have a mind to tell it to you, ma'am; for you've always a kindly word for me, smiling whenever you pass, whether I'm in the dumps or no; and I say the truth this minute: I *don't* want you to have a worse opinion of me than I deserve."

Having assured him that I had never for a moment resented his unsociability, and expressed myself not only willing but anxious to hear the story, which I now felt, from his manner, it would relieve his oppressed soul to relate, I sat beside him on the garden bench and listened to the following tale. He said:

"I was six and seventy years last Michaelmas. I've worked hard since I was a little lad, always at laboring work; but I never drank nor caroused, nor spent my earnings in any shameful way; so that when I married—which I didn't till I was forty—I had a good bit laid by. My wife was as fine a woman as ever stepped, well learned and always fond of reading. Why she ever married the like of me is a wonder. There was no pretence of any foolish love-

making between us; but we were a happy couple for all that. We never had but one child—a little girl, and she was a beauty. When Margaret died—that was my wife—the child was four years. ‘Darby,’ says Margaret, and she drawing her last breath, ‘try and give Nellie a good education; She’s very clever, and ’twill be a fortune to her.’—‘I will,’ says I, ‘if God leaves me my hands to work for her till she’s able to do for herself.’

“I kept my word, ma’am. First I took her to the orphan asylum, paying her board regularly—nine dollars a month. The Sisters made a great pet of her, she was so bright and pretty. After a couple of years’ time I took a notion that it would be a fine thing to make a nun of her; I thought ’twould be such a safe place for her in the convent, and a grand vocation to be teaching the young ones after I was gone. And I knew well that while I’d miss her company, and the loss of her would be keen, *she’d* miss many a sorrow and trial in the world by it; and I had the sure thing of it then; I thought that the three of us would be united in heaven. So I took her from the asylum, and put her

boarding with the Sisters of St. Dominic in C.—, after telling them the plans I'd made in regard to my child. The superior told me it was better for me not to set my heart upon it; for unless they thought she had a true vocation, it would be impossible for them to take her as a novice when she was old enough; and that, above all things, she'd want to have the desire herself. Sure I knew that as well as the Mother could tell it to me; but I said I had great hopes in prayer, and there she agreed with me. And I'm bound to say right here, ma'am, that she made a great reduction in her prices, seeing that I was only a very poor man."

For a moment the old man was silent, shaking his head and sighing deeply. Then he resumed his narrative:

"Dear ma'am," he said, "if I had ever an unworthy motive—such as wanting to make a fine lady of her; or, in the line of vanity, because she was so smart and pretty, striving to imitate those that were born to great advantages,—I could well understand the way and the why the good God scattered my plans and destroyed my hopes entirely.

The thought of that, the wondering about it, has cost me many a sad and bitter hour. But from this on, with His help. I'll take it as my cross and my way of salvation, as the good Father told me yesterday. Well, well, well, but it was strange, anyhow! Well, well!

"Time passed. Nellie learned everything. She was so clever that the Sisters gave her music lessons and charged me nothing extra. She had the voice of a bird, though"—with a pathetic sigh—"I never heard her sing. 'Twas bashful I was to be going there,—that loath, ma'am, I left the town entirely, so that I'd have a good excuse for staying away. Maybe once in the year I'd go; and when I did, I took all the blame to myself and gave none to the child that she was growing cool to me and not caring much to talk to me nor very glad to see me when I did make my way to the place. 'Twas out about the shrubbery she'd always bring me, and once or twice I had a sick fear at my heart that she was ashamed of me.

"'Twas after that I went out West, working on the new railroads a couple of years. I didn't tell the nuns I was going,

but I sent the money promptly, ma'am. Then I felt a great longing to go back and see my little girl. 'Twas a longing that wouldn't be stilled, and I *did* go back. There was a great lot of people on the grounds the day I made my way to the convent, and I had half a mind to turn away till another time; but something made me keep on, through the path and up the steps. There was a new portress: she didn't know me, but the superior came at once. She told me 'twas exhibition day, and she was glad I came; and I well remember that she said though Nellie was doing fine in her studies, she had no hopes of her being a nun. I was sorry for that, but what I thought worse of was what she said after. 'Mr. Doherty,' says she, looking at me kind of sad like and speaking slowly, 'sometimes I feel afraid you've made a mistake altogether.'

"With that there came a tap at the door, and my little girl came in. She wasn't a *little* girl any longer, but a tall slip of fourteen. Would you believe it, ma'am, I was that shy of her I scarce knew what to say? 'Twas of a pretty, proud flower she reminded me. Beautiful she was, but

there were two straight lines between her eyes that I didn't like. One could scarce call them a frown, but it wasn't pleasure nor joy that shone in her big black eyes that day. She was dressed in a white gown with flowing ribbons; she seemed very far entirely from her poor, plain father. The superior went away. As soon as the door closed behind her, Nellie caught me by the hand.

“ ‘Come, father,’ she said,—‘come out in the grounds at the edge of the woods; no one'll see us, and they're coming and going in the parlors all the time.’

“ ‘I will, Nellie,’ says I, taking my hat. ‘But what if they *should* see us? Sure you are not ashamed of your poor father?’

“ ‘Nonsense!’ says she, and her tone was very cross entirely. She led me a quick dance till we got out of sight of the people walking about the garden and sitting in the summer-houses with their children. I sat down on the soft green grass under the trees, but Nellie stood; she said it would spoil her pretty, new white dress to sit on the ground. I tried to talk to her, but her head would constantly turn this way and that way. At last I said:

"'Nellie, my girl, am I keeping you from any friends, or interfering with your lessons in any way by stopping here?'

"'We've no lessons today,' says she; 'and your not keeping me from any friends, father. But I think the bell will ring soon for us to march in rank to the exhibition room; and I don't like to be too far away, for I'm in the first piano piece.'

"'I'm very sorry I choose such an inconvenient day for coming,' says I. 'Maybe I'd better be starting back now?'

"'Yes, father, do,' says she, smiling for the first time. 'Do, and return tomorrow. The girls'll mostly be gone home, and I can have the whole day with you.'

"'My heart smote me then for misjudging her as I had. 'The child is worried,' I thought, 'for fear she'll not be there in the room when she's wanted.' And says I:

"'I will come tomorrow, my girl, and we'll have a jaunt to town for a day or so. But I believe I'll go up to the play. Mother Superior asked me; she said 'twas a shame I never heard you sing or play the piano. I believe I'll go up along with you, and maybe they'll give me a seat somewhere.'

Her cheeks flushed like two roses.

“‘Father,’ says she—‘father, I wouldn’t if I were you. I don’t think you’d understand or enjoy it.’

“‘Very well, then, my girl,’ says I, very quiet. ‘I’ll say good-bye till tomorrow morning.’

“‘I put out my hand; she touched it merely. Then I turned about and left her. When I looked behind me she was flying through the trees; I could see her white dress between the green branches. Bad as I felt, I was loath to go; there was great peace and quiet in the place, and I wanted time to think a bit. So I sat down under a big oak, and leaned my head on my knee. ’Twasn’t long till I heard voices, and one of them was Nellie’s. There was a young girl about her own age with her. Says she:

“‘Where was it you lost your ring, Nellie?’

“‘Here, among the trees,’ says Nellie. ‘’Twas only a few minutes ago.’

“‘Was that old man your father?’ asked the other one. ‘The girls were saying it was.’

“‘*My father!*’ cried Nellie, and I’ll never

forget the scorn in her voice. 'That man my father,—that common old Irishman!'

"I clinched my fists, and held my breath for fear they'd get a glimpse of me sitting under the tree; but they went on and on, and farther away, till I lost sight of them. I was wild with rage and sorrow, ma'am. To get out of the place was all I wanted now. I made for the train as fast as I could, and got on the road for Nevada next morning. 'Twas five long years before I heard tale or tidings of my girl again, or asked for them. And I did more evil in those five years than in all my life before. Ah! but it sends the cold chills through me this day, after confession and Holy Communion, to think how I flung myself away from God."

The old man's lips were dry, his voice trembled with fatigue and emotion. Filling the cup at the well near by, I made him drink some of the clear, cold water, saying:

"You must not tell me any more today, Mr. Doherty; you are tired and overwrought. Some other time, when you feel equal to it, I shall be glad to hear the rest of the story, if there is any more to tell."

“Sure the worst part is to come,” he said, sadly. “But I’ll take your advice, ma’am. I am tired and worn out. But it’s strange that after keeping silent so long, I’m yearning to speak of it all. Father Brown said I’d feel the better for telling it to him, and ’tis a great relief, ma’am, to be going over it to yourself. But I’ll do your bidding and wait till a day next week maybe.”

Entirely thawed from his cold and forbidding demeanor, he accompanied us to the gate, leading the child by the hand. Looking back as we walked up the road, I saw him gazing earnestly after us.

When next I had occasion to go to the Little Sisters, I at once went in search of my old acquaintance but new friend, Mr. Doherty. I found him at last, with the others in the smoking-room; apparently more sociable than formerly, if one could judge by his aspect and the cheerful conversation in which he seemed to be taking part. He arose when he saw me.

“Was it me you were wanting, ma’am?” he inquired.

“Yes,” I replied. “Shall we go into the garden?”

He accompanied me with alacrity.

"I've been thinking, ma'am," he said, "what a strange thing it would be if you'd come across her some day. I'd leave it to yourself to tell her or no where you met me."

"Your daughter is living?" I asked.

"She is, ma'am," he replied,—“or at least she was a while before I came here. Sure she's a young woman still—not much above thirty.”

"She does not know you are with the Little Sisters, then?"

"No; nor would she care, unless it got abroad in some way to injure herself," he said bitterly. "But I forgive her,—I forgive her now, and I feel the better for it. Sometimes the old feeling comes back very strong, and then I say to myself over and over: '*Tis my cross, 'tis my cross, 'tis my cross.*' And I try to keep the view of Christ Crucified ever before me."

He spoke with great vehemence; it was evident from his earnestness that the sorrow which pervaded his life was indeed the most vital part of it. I could not find any words in which to express my sympathy, therefore I remained silent.

“’Twas in Nevada I left myself the other evening, wasn’t it?” he asked, quaintly. “Yes, yes: I remember. Well, from that I went here and there, earning good wages enough; but I was beginning to get old, and I had several hard spells of sickness. Sickness uses up a man’s money fast, ma’am. After five years or so I was steady as any man need be, but lonely, lónely and lonesome always. ’Tisn’t worth while to relate where I knocked about to; but the years passed, and of a sudden a great longing came over me, and I made my way back again to the place where I’d left my little girl. I took great shame to myself, ma’am, to think how I had deserted her, and imposed on the good Sisters, leaving her to them altogether. I’ll not deny that I still had strong hopes of finding her a nun. I was so changed that the superior didn’t know me; and when I asked about Nellie, after telling my own story, she said:

“‘I am sorry to say, Mr. Doherty, that Nellie proved as ungrateful to us as she did to her father. She ran away from the school the year after you were here.’

“For a long time they got no tidings

of her; but finally they heard, from one of the old pupils, that she was working in a photograph gallery in St. Paul. But that was all they had heard in several years. I was sorely disappointed; but I went straight from there to St. Paul, thinking to find her, and hoping when I did that she'd be glad to see me. I worried greatly at this time; but, search where I might, I couldn't find her. I'd stand outside the doors of the churches every Sunday till I'd made the rounds of all of them, hoping to see Nellie coming out from Mass; but all in vain. I had steady laboring work, and lodged with a respectable widow woman that kept a few boarders. I stopped three years in this place, but I could get no news of my girl, till one Sunday morning I was looking at some pictures in the newspaper.

"'Them are the beauties of Chicago,' says Mrs. Ryan, peeping over my shoulder. 'Do you see that one?'" says she, pointing to a lovely-looking woman, barring her low-necked, scandalous gown.

"'Well, and what of her?'" says I.

"'She's the wife of one of the richest men in Chicago,' says Mrs. Ryan, 'a leader in all the fashions; and a few years ago

she was working in a photograph gallery in this very town.'

'I glanced at the picture again. It had a look of Nellie.

'What was her name before she married?' says I.

'The same as your own,' says she. 'She was one Nellie Doherty in the beginning, till she left off going to church and joined the Protestants. Then she changed it to Eleanor Dorten.'

'Are you sure of that?' says I, my heart in my throat.

'Am I sure? Well, I am that,' says she; 'for she had a fine voice, and sang in the choir in the church below till the singing-master coaxed her away to the Episcopalians. 'Twas there she met the young man she married. His father had a great business in Chicago and another here, and the fellow had a terrible time making his people reconciled to the match. But now it's all right, no doubt, from the way I read her name in the papers.'

'Well, it's no concern of ours, any way,' says I, very quiet, not to be drawing down any suspicion on myself. And I said no more.

"After that I had no peace in my mind till I made my way to Chicago. 'Twas easy enough for me to find the place where my girl lived, but I hadn't the courage to make myself known. 'Twas a fine house, ma'am,—a fine house, with a garden all round about it, and several men working among the trees and flowers at the time I went in it; for the spring was early that year, and they were putting the place in order. Well, I hovered round about, trying to catch a glimpse of the lady at a distance to know if it was Nellie. One day I was standing near the palings when the carriage drew up, and what do you think I did, ma'am? Ran away as if I was a thief, for fear she'd see me and be ashamed, and I didn't want to mortify or vex her at all, at all. My plan was to ring the bell some day, and ask for her at the front door; and after I'd spoken with her, and found out if all I'd heard about her leaving the Church was true, to give her a warning and go away. I had no thought of making myself known to her husband, or giving her any shame or annoyance in any way. But my heart hungered for a sight of her, and my conscience was very hard on me for desert-

ing her long ago. I felt sure that was the cause of her running away from the Sisters, and for what happened later.

“The next day after what I told you, I went back to the place. One of the workmen asked me did I want a job. I told him I did, and he bade me come in. All that day I was hauling manure and putting the stable yard to rights. When evening came the gardener told me come back next morning. The master was there when I opened the gate, and a fine figure of a man he was. You may be sure I looked well at him. Along about noon-time I went back of the barn to eat my bit of lunch, when I heard a woman's voice talking inside. It was Nellie's voice, ma'am, and I grew cold all over. I peeped in through a crack. There she was talking to her husband—a grand-looking woman, carrying her head high like a lady born, dressed in a fine, long trailing gown; but the two lines in her forehead were deep as furrows. I didn't like the looks of *them*.

“I sat there a long time after they were gone. I think I fell asleep, though I was never sure. Any way, I jumped up of a sudden with the sound of a great clatter

in my ears. What did I see coming down the drive but the carriage and pair, and the coachman not in it, only Nellie, and the reins dangling on the ground! The horses were running away. I ran in front of them, ma'am, and I stopped them too, though 'twas by a great effort. All the men came running. Nellie was crying and screaming, and they took her into the house. After that I went back to my work. 'Twasn't long till a girl came out and said the lady wanted to see me. "'Tis the hand of God,' says I to myself; and I followed her without a word. She took me into a fine large room, with pictures all about and a piano, and shut the door. I wasn't fairly sitting down when my girl—grand lady that she was now—came from behind the velvet curtains in the middle of the two parlors. She came right over to where I was. I stood up, and says she:

"'My good man, I'm much obliged to you for what you did this afternoon. I might have been killed. Here's five dollars for you, and mind you don't spend it in drink.'

"I reeled with the dint of anger and sore disappointment. I couldn't speak.

“‘I’m almost afraid you’re drunk now,’ says she.

“‘Woe! woe! woe!’ says I, throwing up my hands, ‘and do you hear her?’

“‘I think you are *very* drunk indeed, my poor man,’ says she again, this time stepping back.

“‘O Nellie! Nellie! Nellie!’ I cried. ‘My hair is white and my beard is grey and my shoulders are stooped with age and toil and sorrow, but is my voice so changed that you don’t know your poor old father?’

“With the first word she stepped farther back, her eyes glaring like a fury for one flash, and I saw that she knew me; then they turned cold as ice.

“‘Poor fellow!’ says she, with her head thrown up like a queen, ‘you are crazy as well as drunk, I fear. Go out quietly now, and take your money, or I’ll be under the painful necessity of having you removed by force.’

“‘O my girl!’ I cried,—‘my own little girl! I’ll forgive you all, and I’ll go away and never bother you more, if you’ll only once say “*Father!*” as you used long ago, when you were an innocent child. Your mother and the Blessed Mother of God are

both looking down on you,' says I. 'Don't deny your poor, broken-hearted father.'

"She made me no answer, but pulled the bell-rope that hung by the wall; and before I could say another word a big negro man stood forninst us.

" 'James,' says she, as cool as if she was ordering out the carriage, this poor creature seems demented and refuses to leave the house. Will you kindly assist him to go?'

"He put his hand on my shoulder; but I was a strong man still in those days, ma'am, and I shook him off. Says I:

" 'Dare to touch me, and I'll wipe up the carpet with you. As for you, ma'am, I wish you a long and a busy memory, and all the good luck you deserve.'

"She only smiled down upon me and I turning to the door.

" 'Poor man, poor man! says she, 'tis a pity you couldn't be put in some place where you'd be well cared for. Take this money,—you may need it.'

"I took it from between the three fingers she held out to me and flung it in her face. It struck her on the forehead—full in the two ugly lines that were grown so deep, and that must be a great disfigurement to

her good looks by this; for they are the marks of a hard, ungrateful soul, and such marks work deeper and deeper as time goes on. And that's how I saw her last, ma'am; and how I see her always, by day and by night, when I am thinking and brooding—with a round, red spot on her forehead and a cruel smile upon her lips. I flung myself out of the door, and I've been an old man from that day forth. I went through many hardships till I came to the Little Sisters; but I counted them all nothing to the bitterness of heart that was on me till now. Thanks be to God, the hardness has gone from me mostly; I'll soon be going home, ma'am,—I'll soon be going home."

The old man's head sunk upon his breast. I could not say a word, although my heart was aching for his pain. After a brief silence, he lifted his head and said:

"But, O ma'am, and what can I say to the mother that left her to me as a holy trust? That's what bothers and worries me entirely in these days."

"God takes care of all these things," I said. "I think you have been almost without blame in the sad business, Mr.

Doherty. Yours has certainly been a very heavy cross."

"I don't know,—I don't know," he answered, sadly. "I thought to tell you her name, ma'am; but when it came to the point, I thought better of it again. For when all is said, a father's heart is always a father's heart, and maybe it would be a small thing in me to make her known. You might be meeting her some day, ma'am—stranger things have happened,—and I wouldn't like that it would be through myself you'd be despising her in your mind. God forgive me again, but there are times when, going over it all, I misdoubt but 'tis some kind of a changeling she was, and not the pretty baby that I saw first lying on Margaret's arm of a happy St. Patrick's morning long ago."

My own feelings acquiesced with those of the old man. I was glad that he did not reveal the identity of his daughter. It is very unlikely that she will ever read these lines; but if she should, let her take the comfort which may arise from even a tardy repentance, in the knowledge that her poor old father died with her name upon his lips, forgiving and asking forgiveness.

XV.

A PEACE-BREAKER.

“And so you are back again, Peggy!” I said to a shrewd and shrewish-looking old woman, who sat sunning herself in the garden one balmy morning in spring. She was an untidy old creature also,—that is, as untidy as it is possible for one to be under the *régime* of the Little Sisters. Her cap was awry, her blue checked apron showed numerous wrinkles, and she had only one eye. She was not by any means an attractive-looking personage. It was for that reason perhaps, and because of a certain aversion I could not help feeling for her, that I went out of my way a few steps to address her kindly. That solitary eye was very expressive, however, and it twinkled sharply as she brought its focus to bear upon me.

“I am that, ma’am,” she answered; “and it’s to stay for good this time; for the good Mother tould me positive that wants

I left this agin she'd never take me in. 'Tis partly on that account I'm outside this morning. I couldn't stand the talk of thim Dutch inside. There should be a tax on such a language. Sure the ould boy himself couldn't make sinse of it. And that's what I was going to tell thim this morning; but I bethought me of what the good Mother said, and came out here before I'd let me timper get the better of me. 'Tis a great failing, they tells me, ma'am; but sure it's not wan half as bad as slandering or palavering, like some of thim do be doing."

"But at your age, Peggy," I ventured to remark, "one ought to be able to conquer one's temper a little. It would make life so much easier for you if you did."

"I don't want to conquer it, ma'am," she replied. "I glories in it. 'Tis a family trait. The McCarthys were all high-timpered. 'Tisn't wan of us ud be trampled on by anybody. Only the bit and the sup and the bed's depending on it now, I'd let it loose on thim within this morning till they wouldn't have a foot to stand on."

I saw that she was becoming excited, so thought it best to change the current of her observations.

“How has it happened, Peggy,” I inquired, “that the Little Sisters have taken you back three times, when it is their rule never to readmit an old man or woman who voluntarily leaves them, or who has been expelled for bad conduct?”

Peggy chuckled, at the same time darting another vivid glance from her glittering steel-gray eye.

“The first time they tuk pity on me,” she replied. “The second time I fooled thim, and the third time I shamed thim into it.”

“And how did you manage it all?” I asked; “for I know the good Mother is very firm.”

“I was seventy the day I came in it first,” Peggy answered. “And it was all well enough for six months or so; for I’m a great hand at the knitting, and can turn me hand to many a little thing. I never do be sitting in corners groaning and moaning, like some of thim beyant. By the same token, I thought the good Mother should take me part agin thim rough Connaught rangers and desateful Corkonians that do be cluttering up the Home, keeping dacent people out of it. But, being a

Frinchwoman herself, or I believe a Belgic—pretty near the same,—she can never see the right of it, and cannon-balls wouldn't move a muscle of her mouth to take sides in a quarrel. She's a good craythur, but thim Belgics is very cool-blooded intirely. We can't help our nature's ma'am,—we're as God made us.

“Wan day we were in the midst of a great arguymnt, three or four of us. Mary Malowney was pounding her stick on the floor, and meself just lifting a chair agin Ellen Dowd—she's a Lenister woman,—when down came the good Mother (her room is just above the sewing-room), and says she: ‘What's this, what's this! Fighting and quarrelling so over yer counties, and ye all of the same nation!’ Me blood was up. ‘Tipperary forever!’ I cried, waving the chair. By some accident—for me houl't's not so firm as it was wanst—the leg of it grazed Ellen's cap, and she roared out as if she was kilt. ‘Go, spiteful ould woman,—go to the chapel and ask God to give you a meek heart,’ says the good Mother, turning to meself. ‘Tis then I was angered at her, ma'am, for making an example of me that way, and I cried

out: 'Yis, I'll go; and it's not to the chapel but back to me crony, Mary Lyons, in the Minton Barracks, I'll go. 'There I'll drink me tay tonight.'

"I went. The good Mother didn't oppose me. But I wasn't there long till Mary began wid her ould crankiness, giving me the manest bit of the bacon, and the tay was waker nor water. She'd be out working all the day, and I minding the fire for her and claning the place while she'd be gone. 'Tis a dacent bit and sup I was worthy of, any way. Well, Mary got sick on the top of it all, and the Sisters of Mercy tuk her away wid thim to the hospital; but there was no place for me there, as I hadn't a pain nor an ache, only ould age. Father Masselis—God be good to him!—prevailed on the good Mother, and she tuk me back, ma'am."

"How long before you left for the second time?" I asked.

"I stayed in it a long year, ma'am. Then they tuk in a naygur,—not a very black wan, to be sure; and she was clane, very clane, in her clothes and her ways. But it angered me, and I couldn't help but sneer at her. I never sat down at the

table wid her but I thought of the disgrace of it. So wan day I had some words wid her, and the good Mother spoke very unjust to me; and that time I ran out the gate widout even me feather-bed. But I sent for that, and they let me have it, of coorse. Oh, but I had a weary time of it that spell! The ladies wouldn't help me pay the rent. They all came to hear of it some way, and they said I did wrong to lave the Little Sisters. 'Twas hungry and cold I was, ma'am, when I thought of a plan. I got a lot of rags from the rag house and tuk thim to an empty room in Murphy's Building. 'Twas empty all to a cot. I lay in wait for a little boy I knew outside of the parish school. He lived on the hill forninst us there. And I gev him me last penny to tell the Little Sisters an ould woman was dying of starvation in Murphy's Building. I slept in the room that night, and next morning I didn't rise, but kept under the pile of rags, widout wetting me mouth—for I had nothing to wet it wid, ma'am. When Sister Emilia came wid Sister Clara—she that does be minding the knitting,—I beseeched and implored thim to take me out of it, sick and

sore as I was, and I'd never go agin thim more. At long last they did, ma'am. And I got me feather-bed from Mrs. O'Brien in the Building; for I tuk good care of that always,—that it wouldn't be any the worse. Sure, ma'am, 'twas no harm pretending to be sick in a good cause."

"And the third time, Peggy?" I asked, as she relapsed into silence.

"'Twas this way, ma'am," she replied. "Me timper got ahead of me, as it always does, in regard to a strange Father that said Mass at the Home wan morning. I was back that time for better nor two years, minding me own business and keeping to meself; for I find, ma'am, that when I'm not widin earshot of their foolish talking and sickening boasting, and drawing down the splendor of their grandfathers' farms, and the like, that I've no trouble at all in the way of being peaceable and contented. But this Father was of some sort of haythen appearance, and a man along wid him like himself; and they both chanting out the Mass in an outlandish way, and long beards on the two of thim. I made bould to tell the good Mother that I didn't know what the diocese was coming to when the Arch-

bishop gev lave to the likes of thim to go about saying Mass; and I wasn't slow to tell her either that I didn't believe the man was a priest at all. Wid that the ould women cried at me and made shame of me for being so bould, and that vexed me and drew down a quarrel. The good Mother said I was a disturber, and *that* hurt me; for I call a disturber a tale-bearer, and that's what I never was in me life. So I packed me little bag and tuk me feather-bed agin, and went down by the cable cars to the Home of the Friendless. But they weren't very friendly to me, I can tell ye. They tould me that by me speech I belonged to the Little Sisters, for that's where all the ould Irish Catholic women belonged. That set me crazy, they were so contemptuous; and I tould thim what I thought of thim. There was a thread-and-needle store near by; and the woman, though she was a foreigner of some kind, had an Irish heart, and she tuk me in for the night.

"The next day after that I went to a cousin of my husband's—a widow woman she was,—and she didn't give me much welcome. She's from Connemara, ma'am, and they're very close people. I slept in

the shed there, and made what kept me in food by knitting stockings for better than three months. She went out washing by the day, and I tidied up the place for her whilst she was gone. She wasn't so bad herself, barring the stinginess. But she had a beau; and when I gev her an advice agin making a second marriage, she got angry and sint me about me business. Thim Connemara people are quare, anyhow. After that 'twas aither the Little Sisters or the county-house; and in that place, ma'am, I wouldn't get Mass but wanst or twice a year, and confession maybe if I was dying, and maybe not. Me heart warmed to the Little Sisters, ma'am; so I tuk me feather-bed and me bundle, and I hired an express and came up. After I paid the express man I had twenty-five cents in the corner of me handkerchief, and that was every red copper I had in the wide world.

“I rang the bell, and the good Mother came when I axed for her; but let me back she would not. I begged and pleaded, and after a while I scolded; but nothing would move her. So I settled the cot in front of the door, and sat down upon it till the

dusk of the evening fell. 'There's great travel on the road ma'am—you know it yourself,—and in the mornings and evenings rich gentlemen passing by in their carriages, and ladies too. And some of thim is great benefactors to the Home. I thought to shame her before thim, but I didn't—that night at laste. They thrust out a bite to me, and tould me go away. But I wrapped meself up in me blankets and lay down on the top of me feather-bed, ma'am, and was none the worse in the morning. The good Mother said she'd send for a policeman, but I dared her to do it. I said all the papers would be full of it, especially now that the election was coming on, and thim A. P. A.'s to the fore. She was very mild, ma'am—I wouldn't belie her, and I never saw her lose her timper before nor since,—but she did slam the door on me that morning. There I stayed all day, and the teamsters and coal-drivers and farmers questioning me; but I tould thim I was there for the good of me health, and they were none the wiser, for all I threatened the good Mother. Oh, but I was glad, ma'am, when I saw the clouds gathering and heard the wind rising

as the second night fell! 'Twasn't long till the big rain came, and 'twas the good Mother herself came out for me, and tould Mike Carney carry in me bed and bedding,—that she'd let me stay the night. Sure I was all right then, and I knew it. And that's the whole story, ma'am."

"You have reason to be grateful, Peggy," I said. "I hope you are contented now, and resolved to remain here for the rest of your days."

"I'm back for good, ma'am," she replied, with an emphatic nod of the head. "But thim Dutch tries me greatly wid their outlandish talk. They should have a place by thimselves. When I was here first there wasn't a handful of thim, but the place is going down wid the crowds of thim that's in it. And—whisper, ma'am,—there's another naygur now, and two in the men's building. 'Tis a shame, so it is!"

Six months later I happened to pass Peggy McCarthy on the street. I did not notice her until she accosted me.

"I riz out of the Little Sisters intirely, ma'am," she said. "I had words one day wid an ould Belgic man across the fence of the men's yard; and the good Mother

tuk his part. Sure there's no room in it at all now for a dacent, peaceful woman. 'Tis filled with Dutch and Eytalians, and they tuk in a Greek the day before I left it. I'm getting a dollar a month now from two Protestant ladies that have a heart for the poor. That pays me rent; and I have many a scrap from the cooks that live in the big houses,—all I can ate, any way."

Lifting the cover of a small basket she carried on her arm, she showed a most unappetizing mixture of victuals, on which, judging from the expression of her peculiar looking eye, she set great value.

"Hm! the Little Sisters!" she muttered, as I passed on. "I can get on well widout thim."

* * *

Once in a while—perhaps I should more correctly say, not seldom—the patience of the Little Sisters is sorely tried by such cases as that of Peggy McCarthy. But in the docility and gratitude of the large majority of those whom they shelter they have their earthly compensations.

XVI.

A HEART HISTORY.

He had so long been called "Martin Luther" by the old men that when, after several years of residence at the Home he became a fervent Catholic, the name still clung to him, and he answered to it as readily as to that of "Schulenberg," his rightful patronymic. It had been his proud boast at one time, and probably he was not wrong in his assertion that his ancestors had been among the first to cast in their lots with the Reformers; indeed, the name Schulenberg would indicate as much. He was too truly a gentleman to insult the hand that gave him bread; but his fondness for singing old Luthern hymns, and the tenacity with which he clung to his ancient black-letter Bible, together with the outspoken though unaggressive manner in which he constantly lauded his hero, had been evidence of how thoroughly the heart and soul were identified with that bluster-

ing Goliath and arch-Philistine of the sixteenth century.

He was a gentle, refined, delicate-featured old man. He had been a musical-instrument maker in his native country, from which some great sorrow or misfortune had driven him years ago. He was very reticent about himself and that past which lay behind him in his native land. His conversion to the faith had been sudden ~~and~~ unexpected. A young German Jesuit ~~had~~ noticed and spoken with him. Little by little the old man had opened his heart to his new friend: the tie of country is as strong, perhaps stronger than that of blood. The priest gave him books to read, met his doubts and difficulties with clear and irrefutable answers and explanations, and in three months after their first meeting "Martin Luther" was received into the Church.

Shortly after he became a Catholic his health began to fail, and his sojourns in the infirmary became frequent, and of longer duration at each enforced visit. One day as I sat with Sister Emilia on the upper piazza, watching her darn stockings—for her hands were never idle,—the old

man came slowly out from the infirmary and seated himself on the opposite side of the doorway, in the sun.

“I t’ink I soon be gone,” he said, quite cheerfully. “Always I feel more and more bad, dese days. But before dat I haf some little t’ings to tell. It is good dat I say dem. I t’ink I must do dat. It may be some good to some one. Often I feel like I will say to de good Mother or Sister Emilia dese t’oughts, but I get nefer no chance. Just now it is good, I t’ink—nobody here.”

I arose to go away.

“Oh, no!” he said. “If I haf wanted you to not hear I haf not come out now. Dat would not haf been polite. I haf heard you and Sister Emilia talk when I am inside about Lourdes—de miracles. Well, dat is true, I believe; but also are dere oder miracles just as great, and dat I can myself tell. I t’ink it is of glory to Gott dat I tell. Shall you hear?”

Having expressed our willingness, the old man continued:

“I am in Württemberg born. My fader and grandfader and great-grandfader haf been in de same business: we haf made

musical instruments. All our family and de family of my wife haf been Lutheran from de first. I haf three sons and only one daughter, Hilda. She haf been brought up very strict; but we haf lofed her, and she haf lofed us—her moder and fader and broders—very much. She was pretty and good, and so clefer that when once de aunt of de mayor haf come to Würtemberg, she haf so liked Hilda dat she haf begged me to let her go to Vienna, very far, for a companion to her. I not like dat much; but times not so good, and my two sons marry, so I t'ink and my wife t'ink we let her go; but only for one or two year, and dat make perhaps a good dowry for her when she marry. I do not know dat rich *frau* Cat'olic. How can I, when in Würtemberg all her relations Lutheran?

“ Well, Hilda goes away. One year passes, nearly anoder half, and my wife die suddenly. Den I can not do mitout my girl, and I send for her to come home. She is just as pretty and good and modest as when she go away, if anyt'ing nicer. She haf much grieved for her moder, and it haf soften my own sorrow to see her once more. T'ree days pass; Sunday

haf come, and in de morning early I haf heard de door of de shop open and some one go out. When I come down de coffee is ready, and Hilda is mit her street gown on.

“‘You haf been out so early?’ I say. ‘What has gone wrong?’

“Den she grow very red in de face and she say:

“‘Fader, I haf been to Mass. For a year now I am a Cat’olic.’

“Down I fell into my chair. I look at de other side of de table, where her moder used to sit, and I say:

“‘Mein Gott, why haf I been so disgraced? But good it is dat de moder is is not here to see.’

“Den I make her tell me. It is dat lady who is a Cat’olic. She, too, haf been Lutheran. She haf books, my girl haf read dem, and so it come. I do not know myself any more. I scold my Hilda, I scold at de priests—de rogues of priests I call dem—dat haf make her deceive her fader. But she say:

“‘Fader, in dat I haf been wrong. Dey haf tell me not to do it mitout first telling you and my moder; but I haf been afraid.

But now I am no more afraid. Cat'olic I am, and Cat'olic will I be forefer. I will give you books,' she say.

"But I do not let her speak any more.

"'Books!' I say. 'I will t'row dem out of mein house. Books! I will bring books to *you* dat *you* may read.' And I go to de chest and I bring dem. 'Here,' I say; 'read for a week. I gif you a week, and I say not'ing even to your broders.'

"But she say:

"'Fader, dem books haf I read long ago, and dat is why I read de others when I go to Vienna; for I t'ink it must be some evil mind dat haf written dem against de Cat'olics. Dey can not be so bad. Dem books I t'ank dat I am Cat'olic today.'

"Not much breakfast we eat dat Sunday. Alone I go to church. De boys and de old friends ask where is Hilda. But I say she is sad for her moder; she is not well. After dinner come de broders and deir wives. Den de bad news is told,—I can not keep it. We beg, we plead, we scold, we cry. It is of no use: she is like of marble. But when we finish *she* cry, and say she lofe us all just de same—better,—and please let her be in her own pelief. Den she say

dat is not all. She will marry a young man. He is coming; he is a wood-carver; *he is, too, a Cat'olic.* Even while she is speaking comes a knock at de door. It is he—de man she will marry. Right into dat angry family he come, and you will know how he is receive. Quick I send him away; den de broders go and deir wifes, and I am alone mit Hilda.

“‘One week,’ I say to her,—‘one week I gif you to lif in mein house, and to make up your mind to let dat young man go. After dat, unless you do as I say, you go too. And nefer, nefer, shall you again come in de house you haf disgraced.’

“‘Fader! fader!’ she say, and she fall on her knees.

“‘Yes,’ I say, ‘I mean it.’

“‘O my good, kind fader, dat is always so just and so fond of me! I can not pelieve he mean so hard.’

“‘But I go away and I say not’ing.

“‘Dat was a long week, but I t’ought I was doing right. When it come to an end I say:

“‘Well, Hilda?’

“‘Den she say:

“‘Fader, I *must* follow my conscience.

Otto I will gif up for your sake, dat you will not be all alone, now dat my moder is gone. But my religion—dat I must keep.'

"Den de devil he took hold of me mit all his might, and I say:

"Go! go dis hour mit your Otto, and nefer, nefer, *nefer* let me see your face again!'

"Once more she fall down on her knees, and de tears stream from her eyes, and she beg me and beg me not to send her away. But I am as hard as de rock. Den she go, and when she is shutting de door she look back and say:

"O fader! please only one kind word.'

"Den I say:

"Go out of mein house, and I hope by de Gott of my faders dat I nefer look upon your face again.'"

The old man paused, tears were streaming down his pale cheeks.

"Ach! ach!" he continued, as he wiped them away with his great blue handkerchief, "nefer haf I looked since dat time upon the face of my Hilda; but always is it before mein eyes,—sleeping and waking I see her as on dat terrible day. Let-

ters she haf written from Vienna, where she went mit her husband; but dem I haf nefer answered. At last I haf sent dem all back to her and I haf written: 'Do not write any more to me. I am not your fader: I haf no daughter.' Since dat time I haf not heard."

"How long ago was that?" I asked.

"Twenty years," he replied,—“twenty long, sad, lonely years. Soon I was punish for all dat,” he continued. “My boys do not right. I haf been a little paralyze and can not do such good work. My boys haf cheated me, and deir wifes haf said I am not much help any more. My youngest son he wish much to come to America. I come along, mit some little money. He die on de sea. Here am I all alone; my money soon gone. Once more I am a little paralyze. I lie in de hospital. When I get better I hear of dis Home. I t’ink it not Cat’olic,—I t’ink not’ing much of dat. I am ashamed to come when I t’ink of what I haf done; but de good Mother she kind and take me in. I like de Sisters, but I stick to my religion till Fader Hensch come. Den he make me Cat’olic. But one t’ing I forget. My Hilda write once:

"You can say, you can do what you like, mein fader; but I love you and I pray for you all de same. I am always your child, and my little girls dey pray always for you. Dey t'ink you love dem.'

"Now, I t'ink why I come to de Little Sisters. Gott hear dat prayer, if I do not deserve it, and bring me here to be a good man and die good. Maybe my daughter live, maybe she die; but I t'ink dat a miracle I come here. What you t'ink?"

"The hand of God was in it, Mr. Schulenberg, I believe," said Sister Emilia. "But I have an idea that He will do still more for you, and the next thing will be to find your daughter."

"But how, Sister,—how," nervously replied the old man, "when I write and write and write again since two year, and not find anyt'ing of her? Once, de last time, my letter comes back. I write dat I am well and not poor, and ask her pardon for what I do. I would not dat she know I am in de Home. You understand, Sister, it is not dat I haf not feeling of grateful in my heart. But you understand?"

"Certainly, I do," was the reply. "From what you say it would seem that you can

not find any trace of your daughter. Still God is never tired of helping us. Perhaps by writing to the Little Sisters in Vienna we may be able to do something."

The worn face brightened.

"Ach! dat will be good, Sister," he said.

"I haf not t'ought of dat. Glad am I dat I haf told you my story."

After a few words of sympathy, I took my departure, wishing and praying that the old man might be able to hear some news of his daughter before the close of his life, which could not now be far distant. I heard the conclusion of his story some time after, from Sister Emilia.

"I have something wonderful to tell you," she said one day. "'Martin Luther' has gone."

"Not dead?" I exclaimed.

"No: gone with his daughter."

"With his daughter! Why, that *does* look like a miracle! How did he find her?"

"She found him here in the Home, and quite accidentally. Come upstairs to the linen room, and I will tell you about it while I am looking over the clothes to be mended."

I needed no second invitation, and in

a few moments Sister Emilia was telling me the strange sequel of the old man's story. She said:

"The very next Sunday after you were here the poor man was sitting on the upper piazza; he had not been able to go downstairs since his illness. The house was unusually filled with visitors that day. Among them were a gentleman and lady, with two young girls of about sixteen and eighteen,—all well dressed, good-looking, and refined. They were Germans, I knew; for I had heard them speaking.

"'We have but recently come to the city to live,' said the lady, who was about forty years old; 'but wherever we have lived we have always been much interested in the Little Sisters and the old people whom they have under their charge.'

"She had scarcely finished speaking when one of the girls, who had been in advance, came hurrying back.

"'Mamma,' she said, 'there is such a dear old man out there! He is so clean, so gentle-looking and so refined that it is a pleasure to see him. Come and speak to him. I know he must be German.'

"'Hilda! Hilda!' said the other, joining

her, 'he wishes you to come back; he says you remind him of some one, and he is crying.'

"I will tell you frankly," laughed Sister Emilia, "that, with my usual mind-reading and prophetic intuitions, as you call them, I foresaw the *dénouement* at once. I hurried them over to our dear old Mr. Schulenberg, whom we found in a state of great excitement.

"'Hilda! Hilda!' he cried out, standing up and looking wildly about him. 'Who called Hilda, or did I hear right?'

"And then followed a scene. The lady threw her arms about the old man, crying aloud; the girls caught the infection; the gentleman wiped his eyes, and I will not deny that there were a couple of tears in my own. You know how emotional the Germans are. Paternal and filial affection with them is remarkably strong.

"'Oh, to think that we should find you here!' said the lady.

"'Oh, to think that she does not turn away from her hard-hearted father!' said the old man.

"'But, mamma, you always said grand-papa was dead!' exclaimed the girls.

"Only the husband stood a little aloof and said nothing, though he, too, shared in the wild delight of the others.

"Little by little the strange story was told. The daughter had not dared to communicate further with her father after he had returned her letters, and she came to this country with her husband and family shortly after he had left Germany. They had prospered; she had taught her children to revere his memory, and to recognize in every indigent old man and woman whom they met the grandparents they had never known. I believe that woman and her husband are perfect Christians.

"After the first excitement had subsided, the husband was brought forward, and the two men fell into each other's arms, and said a great deal in German which I could not understand. It was pathetic to hear that poor old man accusing himself of unworthiness, and to see the daughter and her children beside themselves with joy at having found him.

"By this time a crowd had gathered, and I thought it best to announce the good news. Then ensued another five minutes of rejoicing and congratulations from the

old people, men and women. It all ended by 'Martin Luther' being carried away in triumph to his daughter's home. The last thing I heard, as they got into the carriage, was:

“‘Mamma, it must have been that for which you have always been praying to dear St. Anthony.’

“‘It was, it was, my darling!’ said the mother; ‘and now we will have many Masses said in his honor, and will make an offering for the new statue in the Franciscans’ Church.’

“‘And something tomorrow for the Little Sisters,’ added the husband, trying to get in a word in the midst of their joyful chatter.

“‘The next day the old man and his daughter returned. He had not slept well, he said, fearful that he had not sufficiently expressed his gratitude to us before he left us the day before. Poor old man! I wish that all were as grateful. His daughter left a substantial cheque with the good Mother, and gifts of groceries have been pouring in on us ever since.’”

“‘What a delightful ending to a sad story!’” I said, when she had finished.

"Yes, indeed," replied Sister Emilia. "Especially as the poor old man has but a short time to live. It is only another exemplification of the power of prayer. Oh, I could tell many wonderful stories like that," continued the good religious, as she laid the last article of clothing in the well-filled basket, which we carried down to the sewing-room together.



XVII.

THE "SMELLING COMMITTEE."

One day I dropped in at the Home for the Aged, to find the old women in a state of great excitement. Certain ladies of the city, members of the Society for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Worthy Poor, had become possessed of the idea that they had a mission to investigate the workings of various charitable institutions, notably Catholic orphan asylums and similar refuges. They had chosen this day—a very inclement one—for their visit to the Little Sisters; and the good Mother had sent word from the parlor, where she had received them, that they would presently make their appearance in the sewing-room, where most of the old women were already assembled.

I must confess that I shared their indignation at the news; and, in order to be an unobserved witness of what would occur—as I had no doubt the proceedings would

be of interest,—I took my station at the farthest corner of the room, where "little Miss Powers," as she was familiarly called, made room for me beside her. She was a small, slight, delicate creature, of great personal neatness, a favorite with all who knew her.

In the midst of the voluble chatter of the old women the door opened, and the good Mother stood on the threshold, making way for a bevy of so-called ladies, who at once took up their station in the centre of the room, where seats had been provided. Four sat down quietly, taking no part in the subsequent proceedings,—the burthen of which devolved on two, who had no doubt been chosen to conduct the "investigation." One of these was small, dark and thin, with a length of nasal appendage that suggested inquisitiveness carried to the verge of impertinence; the other, tall and distinguished in appearance, with wavy iron-grey hair, and a profusion and splendor of lace and black satin which betokened an unlimited purse, if not the most excellent taste. I saw my little friend, Miss Powers, cast one swift, startled glance on this personage, while her delicate face

flushed pink; and I wondered much at the suddenness with which she unfastened her neat blue check apron, throwing it over her head with the edge falling well down over her face, so as almost to hide it. Then she went quietly on with her work, not taking any part in the excitement that began to manifest itself among the others.

We heard the good Mother say—I fancied in a slightly amused tone, though the flush on *her* cheek was also a little more vivid than usual:

“I think you will find, Madam, that they are all happy. At least you have only to ask them.”

“Bad cess to thim for a Smelling Committee!” said one old woman, in a loud whisper. “Bad cess to thim for meddlesome busy-bodies! I’d like to have a pot of scalding water to throw down upon thim from the gallery.”

“Sh! sh!” added another. “The good Mother will hear you, and she’ll be very angry,—you know she told us not to mind thim when they come.”

“What do you mean by the Smelling Committee?” I asked, endeavoring to control an inclination to laughter.

"'Twas in the papers, ma'am. Didn't you hear of it? Sure Father tould the good Mother of it. 'Tis some busy-bodies of idle women that has nothing to do but put their noses in other people's affairs. 'Twas Nellie Regan beyant that gave thim the name of the Smelling Committee, and right well it suits thim. They do be going around investigating on their own hook to see are we well treated here,—we and the orphans, ma'am, and the poor souls in the St. Francis' Hospitals,—in the free wards, I mane. You see, they have thim-selves out for the philanthroping of humanity, ma'am, or some such business,—whatever it manes."

I could not help smiling, while the other old woman added:

"Whist! whist! the one with the big nose and the black lace bugles is going to spake."

Looking toward the visitors, I saw that the much-adorned woman was waving her black-gloved hand. A silence fell upon the room, which had been filled with the buzz of indignant whispering voices.

"My good women," said their would-be benefactor, "I am your friend,—I am the

friend of all who are poor and oppressed. I have devoted not only my life, but the greater part of a large fortune—left me by my husband, the late James T. Billinghast, the well-known philanthropist—to the amelioration of the poor and oppressed. Poor you are,—that is evident; but I trust you are not oppressed." A pause followed. She looked about her, turning her plumed head slowly from side to side. No one spoke. "I repeat, I trust that you are not oppressed,—neither coerced nor oppressed."

Then ensued some whispering among the groups, after which a smart little woman stood on her feet and said:

"Poor we are, ma'am, and *very* poor; if we weren't we wouldn't be in it, but on our own flures. But as for thim other words you drew down to us, I misdoubt if many of us know the maning of thim. But, ma'am, if they're in the way of any complaint agin the Little Sisters, nayther one nor the other fits us."

A murmur of approbation followed this declaration. The lady bowed from right to left, and exchanged a few words with her companion, who stepped briskly to the front, and said:

"By the permission of my friend, Mrs. Billinghamst, who entertains what I consider a mistaken delicacy about coming directly and bluntly to the point, I would ask you, my good creatures, in plain English: Are you happy in this place?"

A loud chorus of voices responded:

"We are! We are!"

"Are you well fed?"

"We are. Do we look starved? Shame on ye for pretinded ladies!" came from different quarters of the room.

"Have you sufficient covering on your beds in the inclement season?"

"To be sure we have."—"It's too warm we are intirely."—"Ach! ach! the insult!"—"Have a care, ma'am, or you'll be warmer than you'd like yourself directly."—"Put 'em out, good Mother! put 'em out!" followed this interrogation.

The good Mother raised a warning finger, as she remarked:

"The motives of these ladies are probably good. I beg that you will not misunderstand them, but answer all questions they may put as truthfully as you can."

Another murmur of disapprobation came from the old women.

Gently pushing her companion behind her at this juncture, the affable Mrs. Billinghast again stepped forward. Turning to the good Mother, she said:

"While I do not wish to insinuate that these poor people are intimidated or frightened by your presence, I would suggest that, in the spirit of fairness and equity, you retire to another apartment while we question them further."

"I doubt if it would be wise," replied the good Mother, a quiet smile on her lips and mirth fairly dancing in her bright black Breton eyes. "But if you wish it, I will go."

Meanwhile a bent, shrivelled little woman had been edging her way to the front, urged by the nudges of those behind her, and encouraged by the smiles and nods of her friends on either aisle. She reached the good Mother's side just as she was replying to the suggestion already mentioned.

"And what is it she asks ye do, good Mother?" inquired the old woman, who rejoiced in the name of Alley Fogarty.

"The lady thinks you would answer her questions more freely if I were to go out," was the reply.

"'Tis frightened of her they thought maybe we'd be," said another.

At this a loud murmur, amounting almost to a wail, burst from the inmates, who were now crowding closer together, all anxious to see and hear.

"Go out, Mother darlint!" said Alley Fogarty. "Go, *asthore!* Sure they won't hurt us,—they mane well."

"Do, good Mother," said another old woman, who had followed Alley from the rear. Her name was Betty Mullen. They were the two oldest inmates of the Home, and had been with the Little Sisters since its foundation.

"Yes, oblige thim; do!"—"Be polite to the ladies, and lave yer own rooms when they ask ye."—"Take a turn in the garden, good Mother; 'twill refresh ye," resounded on all sides. One would almost think they spoke by a concerted plan, so unanimous seemed to be their wish that the good Mother should comply with the request of the visitors.

Scarcely able to repress the laughter which arose to her lips, the good Mother hesitated no longer, but quietly opened the door and left the room.

For a moment there was silence, save for the whispered conference of the two visitors. Finally Mrs. Billinghamst faced about, saying:

"I understand there are several Protestants here. Let such persons, if there be any, stand up."

They did as requested, to the number of ten.

"Why, my misguided friends," she continued, "have you sought this institution in preference to one where you would have the privilege of reading the Gospel and of hearing the truths of religion instead of the falsehoods of superstition?"

A woman quietly replied:

"I can say for myself, ma'am, that I came here because it was the only place open to me."

"There is the Widows' Home," said the hench-woman of Mrs. Billinghamst.

"A sum of money which I did not have was required for entrance there, ma'am."

"That was my case exactly," observed another of the Protestant group. "There is too much red tape about Protestant Homes for me."

The visitors seemed nonplussed. How-

ever, after another brief and (for them at least) somewhat embarrassing silence, Mrs. Billingham continued:

"I understand that you are obliged to drink tea and coffee made from the refuse of the hotels. Is such the case?"

"We're not required to drink ayther, ma'am, unless we like it. We can have hot or cold water instead," answered the smart little woman mentioned in the beginning of the recital.

"But *do* you like it, and *can* you drink it?" inquired the visitor, in a compassionate tone.

"'Tis better than many of us had before we came in it," was the reply. "Coffee and tay don't be rising up out of the ground, ma'am; and if the Sisters isn't above gathering it for us, we shouldn't be above drinking it, and we're not."

Loud murmurs of approbation, with several uneasy "Ahems!" from the visitors, who began to look about, not without apprehension, as the circle of old women gradually closed around them.

At this moment Alley Fogarty stepped forward, holding her friend Betty by the hand. Each dropped a curtsy.

"Do you spake for us, Alley," said the other.

"I will," answered Alley, with great self-possession. "'Tis I that am aigual to 'em, thanks be to God!" Then, with all the strength of her old, tremulous voice, she continued, addressing herself to the Committee:

"Ladies—for by yer clothes ye should be ladies, but by yer manners there's no telling what,—I am eighty past, and this ould woman by me is turning eighty-three. We're in the Home from sixty up, a hundred poor ould men and women. Some of us left our kin when we were young, and we lost track of thim, and they of us. Some of us were bereaved by death. Some of us had ungrateful childher, that left us in our ould age; and some of us never had any childher to be a stab to our hearts. Most of us came here clane and dacint and paceable, and had seen better days; a few of us never knew a good home till we came to it. Some of us came with warm clothing and comfortable feather-beds; some of us had no clothing to cover us but what we had on our backs. But the good Little Sisters welcome all alike. Thim that's

covered with vermin they wash with their own hands and give thim clane clothes; thim that's naked they cover. Me and the ould woman beside me know—they all know it, but we're the ouldest and we're in it the longest—that if it weren't for the Little Sisters, the most of us would be in the pickling vats of the medical colleges long ago; for that's where they lave the poor and friendless that die in the hospitals of ould age, or in dirty tenement houses of neglect and starvation. And there's many a good man and woman took to the drink from poverty and sickness in their latter days; and there's many a one cured and saved from that same evil, by coming here. 'Tisn't friends they are to us, but good, kind fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers tin times over. D'ye see, ma'am? D'ye understand?"

"Whist, Betty! Ye're disgracing me," she added, sharply, turning to her companion, who began to whimper audibly. "Sit down, Betty,—sit down, ye poor ould creature! 'Tis too much for ye."

Gently placing Betty on a bench, she turned once more to her audience, who seemed to have lost the power of speech;

and this time she shook her fist in the faces of the discomfited Committee, as she cried, in tones of fiercest scorn:

"Ladies ye calls yerselves, do ye? Ah! 'twas an idle and a foolish hour for ye when ye set out to throw mud on the Little Sisters of God's poor, with yer investigations and yer insults. 'Tis well for ye ye're where ye are, and that we all know our duty to thim that shelter us, in the way of not maltrating the stranger; for if it weren't for that same, I'm loath to say what reward ye'd get for yer pains. But we respect the Sisters, and we'll let ye go paceable and quiet, *if ye'll go widout any more talking.* Thim that called ye the Smelling Committee named ye well, and I'm thinking the scent of ye won't lave this place before a month of Sundays. And I'll warn ye, *ladies,*" she added, as they silently filed past her, with their noses well up in air and a tremulous scorn on their lips,—“I'll warn ye that, aisy as ye had it here, ye mightn't find it so aisy in the men's quarters, if ye're thinking of calling in. 'Tis few words they'd spake to ye, but—”

Then, as the door opened, and the crest-fallen Committee, looking neither to the

right nor the left, passed into the corridor, there arose as by one accord from sixty throats, withered, trembling though they were, a "Hurrah for the Little Sisters!" that made the stout walls ring again.



XVIII.

LITTLE MISS POWERS.

It will be remembered that on occasion of the visit of the "Smelling Committee," described in the last "Chronicle," I mentioned that "little Miss Powers," beside whom I was sitting at the time the visitors made their appearance, had hastily thrown her apron over her head in a manner which struck me as peculiar, and to which I attached some significance. She was, ordinarily, such a matter-of-fact, sensible person that I felt she had not done this from a mere freak, and I resolved to ask her motive at the first opportunity. This was rendered unnecessary; for on my next visit to the Home, which was on the Feast of St. Joseph—the patronal Feast,—she came to meet me from a crowd of happy old women, making merry over the antics of a playful child of eighty-five or thereabouts, who was dancing a jig in the arbor.

"Good-afternoon!" said my little friend.

"I have been anxious to see you ever since that day when I threw my apron over my head in the sewing-room. I wonder what you thought of me?"

"I have been not a little curious about it, I acknowledge," I replied. "To tell the truth, I was going to ask you today why you did it."

"And I intended to tell you all about it," she rejoined, as we walked down the path together. "I recognized that woman at once, and did not wish her to recognize me in *this* place. I could not have borne it."

"You knew her, then?" I said. "I refer to the distinguished-looking leader."

My companion smiled, and went on:

"We worked together in a milliner shop in Boston for seven years. She was a foundling, taken out of the poorhouse and adopted by a good truck-man and his wife, who had no children of their own. When they died she came to room next to me, and that is how it came about—that—well, that she ruined my life for me. Perhaps God will forgive me that I can not forget the injury, altogether; for I have never wished her harm. But I always try to

banish the thought of her when it comes; it is not pleasant."

"Let us sit here on the steps of the chapel," I said. "You will be tired walking about in the hot sun; you are such a frail little creature."

"I was always a very delicate little thing," she said, after we had seated ourselves. "I was left an orphan young, but managed to take care of myself well enough; and I was not without education, being fond of reading,—not romances or story papers, but solid, good books. When I was about eighteen I became acquainted with a young man who lodged in the same building. We met one morning coming from Mass; and, as we were both Catholics, we soon formed a friendship for each other, which gradually deepened into love. He was not very strong; and, being just out of his apprenticeship—he was a machinist,—we could not think of marrying. Ours was not a romantic courtship: we just jogged on together quietly and sensibly. We never quarrelled. He told me all his plans and hopes for the future, and we were very happy. Arthur was a handsome fellow, much better-looking than I was;

and many of the girls would have been glad to be in my place. But, still, he was too quiet for most of them. He didn't care much for parties or picnics, neither did I. He never seemed to know there was any other girl but myself after we began to like each other. He was always planning little inventions. One in particular occupied much of his time and thoughts. He said he knew it would make him a rich man if perfected. My own brains were not so bad, and we spent many an hour together trying to bring it to the point.

"I don't know exactly where or when Asenath Ashcraft saw him first, but she suddenly began to tease me about my handsome beau. Then she was vexed because he didn't notice her; and finally we had some words, when she said she could take him away from me if she tried, and I dared her to do it. He once asked me how I could find any pleasure in her society, he thought her so bold and forward; and he wouldn't even admit that she was handsome. There was no doubt in my mind as to that. I wasn't mean enough, though I didn't like her, to deny her what was due her on the score of good looks.

She dressed well, and thought a good deal of fixing herself up; in fact, that was about all she *did* think of. Maybe I oughtn't to be hard on her. She had no religion.

“Very soon after we had the little spat she came to room in our building. She tried to be great friends with me, and was always running in and out. Arthur would not treat her even with decent civility. She didn't seem to mind his snubs at all, but was just as sweet as she could be to him.

“I was taken sick with typhoid fever that fall, and was obliged to go to the hospital. From that I went to Salem, where I had a cousin; for I wasn't able to work, I was so weakened by the fever. When I returned to my own little room, again, I felt that something was wrong with Arthur; and when Asenath came in I read the whole story. She had actually bewitched him while I was away. Henceforth he had eyes and ears only for her. I had had my day of happiness, and now it was over. I never saw any one change as he did, I was disgusted with his conduct; so I took myself off again one morning to Salem, and found work there. It

wasn't long till I heard they were married, and by that time I had tried to get used to it. Everyone thought it an ill-assorted match.

"Four years passed. I never heard anything of them. I hoped they were happy; I was almost beginning to believe I had been prejudiced against Asenath, and that perhaps she was making him a better wife than I could have been. Finally, I went back to Boston, and got work in my old place. The morning I began there I was very much surprised to see Asenath come in and sit down at the long table with the others. She looked tawdry and shabby. I said nothing, asked no questions of any one, but I wondered whether Arthur could have died. I was hoping she hadn't noticed me; I didn't want to be so close to her, and resolved to find another place as soon as possible. But she soon recognized me. At noon-time she came over, sat down beside me and said:

"'Well, Fanny, I suppose you're surprised to see me at the shop again. Are you not?'"

"'Yes, Asenath,' I said, 'I am. I did not know your husband was dead.'

“‘Dead!’ she exclaimed. ‘He’s *not* dead. I wish he were. But he is dead drunk nearly all the time, and that’s why I’m here. If it gives you any comfort to know that I put my foot in it, there you have it. I married him only because you dared me to get him away from you, anyhow; and he soon found it out.’

“‘I thought I should faint where I sat. I could not fancy the Arthur I had loved a drunkard. I was shocked by her heartlessness. I had not a word to answer her. ‘O Asenath!’ was all I could say. I ought to have despised him, perhaps; they always do in novels, you know. But I only pitied him, and all the old wounds were opened again. I worked only one day in that shop. I did not wish to meet her. And, what was worse than all, the girls told me she did not bear a very good name.

“‘Several months afterward, one winter evening about six o’clock, as I was returning from work, I felt myself roughly grasped by the shoulder. I looked around. It was Asenath.

“‘Look here, Fanny!’ she said. ‘You are just the person I want to see. I’m not living with Arthur any more; I’m tired

taking care of a drunken wreck, so I think I'll save myself for a handsomer man. He fairly hates the sight of me, so we're neither of us crying about the other. The fact is, he's at the Charity Hospital. I went to see him once, but he was out of his head, and calling "Fanny!" Now you can see I'm not as bad as you thought me, or I wouldn't have told you. You're a Christian, you'd better go to see him.'

"And before I could answer her she was gone.

"On Sunday I went to the Hospital. He was dying of quick consumption. I would not have known him. He asked me who had told me. I answered:

"'Asenath.'

"'Ah, Fanny!' he said, 'that is one good turn,—the only one she ever did me. If you ever bore me a grudge, dear old friend, you have had your revenge.'

"'Arthur,' I said, 'what is past is past. Do not let us speak of it again. All you have to think of now is eternity and your salvation. The Sister tells me you know that you are going fast.'

"He smiled. 'I am faring much better than I have deserved,' he said; 'but there

will be a very long stretch in purgatory before I reach heaven.'

"I went every evening until he died. I think those weeks were the happiest time of my life. I was so thankful to see *him* so happy and content. He grew to look like his old self again; for good care and kindness make a wonderful difference. He did not suffer much. Asenath never came near him; we never spoke of her. Only by the long, sad look he would sometimes fix upon me as I sat beside him could I tell that his thoughts were with the past. And so pure and free from every taint of earth was my affection for him that I might have been his mother waiting to receive his last breath. In those last days I really grew to feel as a mother would, if watching her dying child.

"One Sunday I went early, as I was free for the day. I saw a great change in him. He recognized it himself, and asked for the Viaticum. After all was over, I thought, by the expression of his eyes, he wanted to say something.

"'Fanny,' he began, 'do you remember the device you and I invented together?'

"‘Yes,’ I said. ‘I had not much to do with the invention, though.’

"‘But you had,’ he answered. ‘It was really your suggestion that put the right thing into my head about it. I laid it aside; but—well—after a while, when I began to be unhappy, I took it up again and finished it.’

"‘And did you ever try to get it patented?’ I asked.

"‘No,’ he replied. ‘But I wanted to tell you that I would have made it all right with you if I had.’

"‘I would not have taken anything from you, Arthur,’ I said. ‘Be sure of it.’

"‘Well, that might have been, too,’ he answered; ‘but I wanted you to know.’

"I asked him what had become of it.

"‘A Mr. Billinghast, one of the firm of Daning Brothers, to whom I tried to dispose of it, came to see me about it several times. He was so interested in it that I knew it must be good. But the day before I came here—the very day she went away—Asenath burned the model by mistake. And so my last hope went down with my wrecked life.’

"‘Poor fellow! how I pitied him! But I

made light of it. He died before the day closed. I was the only one who followed him to the grave. Asenath I never saw again until she came here last week. But something that occurred shortly after has kept her in my memory all these years. First she married Mr. Billinghast, and that created a great sensation in the city, his family being very proud. Next her husband made a large addition to his fortune by the invention of a piece of machinery, which I have never had the slightest doubt was Arthur's own invention, the model of which Asenath pretended to have burned. Now she stands at the top of the ladder, and I am at the foot. But it is needless to say to you that I do not envy her, and would not change places with her. I have often read of her in the papers as a leader in society and societies. That is why I covered my head with my apron that day; for I would not have had her recognize me. She might have offered me charity,—she probably would not have pretended to know me; but I preferred to spare her and myself either alternative."

I looked down at the pale, kind face and snowy hair; and thought, as I had often

thought before, of how strange a thing is life, and how tangled and inexplicable the web the design of which is made plain and straight only by the great Designer in the land that lies beyond.

"How strange," I said, "that you and she should be in the same place, and in such different circumstances!"

"I would not exchange the peace and happiness of my life for all her wealth and position," she replied. "If rumor speaks true, she lived as unhappily with her second husband as her first. The injury she did me I try to forget. Arthur I forgave before he ever married her. I never bore a grudge against him. There is nothing in my memory of him but kindness and affection. And she—I doubt if she knows where he is buried." After a short pause she added: "There is a little woman in Boston who takes care of his grave for me. When I came out here with my cousin fifteen years ago I gave it in her charge. She is a priest's housekeeper. I used to trim her bonnets without charge. Every year after Decoration she writes me a letter, and tells me how nicely the myrtle is growing on it. Last year she had the head-

stone cleaned. It was very good of her; for I never have a penny of my own to send her. But she will soon be going: she is quite old. I am not so old; it is my heart that is weak."

"It is a strong, brave, faithful heart, that of yours," I said, clasping her small, worn, tender little hand.



XIX.

THE STORY OF A WRONGED PRIEST

About forty years ago there came to a growing town in one of the Southwestern States a young priest, who, by his piety, zeal, and many other beautiful and noble qualities, endeared himself to all who knew him. He was a Canadian by birth; but his mother, an Irishwoman, had long wished to reside in the United States; and it was to please her that he left his native diocese and cast his lot in a new country, among a new people. He was the only son of that mother, and she was a widow. She was a refined and educated woman, greatly superior in every respect to those among whom she had chosen to spend her declining years; but she never asserted her superiority in any way, and the people became almost as warmly attached to her as to Father D. It soon grew to be, in every sense, an ideal parish.

Five years the shepherd and his flock

dwelt together in harmony, when suddenly the health of the widow began to fail, and she found it necessary to take a servant. One was found in the person of a stout, ruddy-faced Englishwoman, whom Father D. brought home with him from a trip to the city where the Bishop resided, and whither he had gone on some diocesan business. She proved to be well fitted for her avocation, and was soon required to add that of nurse to her other duties; for Mrs. D. began to fail rapidly. She died at the expiration of a year, mourned by all who knew her, but making desolate the heart of her son, who, with the exception of the time spent at college and in the seminary, had never been separated from her.

For some time all went quietly in the little household, now consisting only of the priest and his servant, who had never affiliated with the towns-people, and was not well known by any of them. But this state of affairs was gradually changed. Twice or three times Father D. was reported to be ill,—something that had not occurred before during his ministrations at C.; and there was considerable quiet

whispering and grave shaking of heads among the elderly fathers of families, who represented the most prominent portion of the congregation. Several times the housekeeper was seen issuing from the various places of business of these gentlemen. There was something unusual in the air, though the knowledge of it was confined to the very few.

At length the storm burst forth. None who were present ever forgot that morning in early spring, when the Bishop suddenly made his appearance in the sanctuary where Father D. was preaching after late Mass, ordering him then and there to remove his vestments and go forth forever from the temple of God, an unfrocked priest, a ruined and dishonored man. Nor could they forget the horror that thrilled the hearts of his people as the young priest obeyed, without a single word in his own defence, so absolutely and so quickly that when the Bishop returned to the pastoral residence the dishonored priest had departed without having taken a single article of clothing from his bureau, nor a book from the library, which was all his own, and which had been his only worldly treasure.

With that inherent cruelty which seems inseparable from human nature — the cruelty which cried out “*Crucifige!*” on Him whom a few short days before they had greeted as a King,—the majority of those to whom Father D. had ministered faithfully and unselfishly for years judged him guilty of the offence with which he was charged, and worthy of the punishment he had been made to undergo. The suddenness of his departure, and his entire disappearance from that memorable Sunday, strengthened this belief on their part. But there were others, although their number was not great, who lived and died as firmly convinced of his innocence, interpreting his submission as sacrifice, his silence as the complete abnegation of one whose only aim was to follow his Master step by step, with thorn-crowned brow and pierced heart and bleeding feet, *all the way* to the heights of Calvary. Subsequent events pointed to the truth of that opinion.

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In a small lumber-room, upon a comfortable cot, at the Home for the Aged at X., an old woman lay dying by her own hand. She had long suffered from a can-

cerous disease of the mouth and throat, which had at last begun to emit an odor so offensive that the Little Sisters were obliged to remove her from the dormitory, and make her a bed in this primitive but cleanly place. She had felt her affliction so keenly that her life had lately been one of almost entire isolation. She had always been a strange old woman, generally maintaining a reserved silence; although at times she would be attacked by a species of mania, during which she would walk about the yard, clenching her hands and calling on God to pardon her, with wild objurgations for some crime of which she accused herself. These attacks were always followed by seasons of great melancholy. Vainly did the Little Sisters try to lead her thoughts to religion. She was not, and had never been, a Catholic, she said; across the threshold of the chapel she never set her feet.

One morning on going to her bedside, one of the Little Sisters found her bleeding from a severed artery in her wrist, which she had cut during the night with a piece of glass, hoping, she said afterward, that she would have been relieved of her suffer-

ing before morning. When found, she was greatly exhausted; but after the physician had been summoned, she was revived temporarily by stimulants. It was after the Sisters had endeavored, without success, to prevail upon her to see a clergyman that she seemed to acquire an artificial strength, and protested against the mention of such a thing, loudly crying out that for her there was no salvation. Finally, she exclaimed:

“Good Mother, moisten my lips so that I may be able to tell you who and what I am. I thought to die with my crime and my secret unrevealed; but the devil, that has lodged in my soul for many years, has got the better of my will at last, and forces me to reveal all.”

Then, between intervals of weakness, during which the good Mother wiped from her brow the clammy sweat of death that was already gathering there, she told her terrible story, which I give from memory as best I can, having received it only at second hand from the Little Sisters. She said:

“My father was a Catholic; my mother had no religion. In fact, neither of them

had any, although they were always quarrelling about it. This much I remember: I was born in London, received a fair education, and lived there until I was sixteen years old. At that time I ran away from home, and was on the streets until I was past twenty years of age, when I was arrested in Liverpool for theft. After I had served my term in prison, the matron persuaded me to go into the House of the Good Shepherd at —, not far from London, where she had a relative among the Sisters. (She was not a Catholic herself.) But I very soon tired of the restraint. After six months' time I ran away, although I could have gone out decently if I had wished to do so. I went back to my old life, drifted to Canada, and afterward to the United States, when I met Father D. on the street one unfortunate day, and asked him—knowing by his appearance that he was a priest—if he knew of any one who wanted a servant. My English speech recommended me to him at once; he took me home to his mother.

“I soon won her affection, and, by a great show of zeal and affected piety, by degrees

inspired confidence in the priest. One day Mrs. D. was suddenly taken sick, and died in a few hours, leaving Father D. grief-stricken; for he was especially devoted to her. A few weeks afterward I received a letter from one of the companions of my evil days, detailing a wicked project she had formed, and saying that if by any device I could obtain the money necessary to carry it through, I should share in the profits. I had always been tortured by the desire to steal, and in this case the temptation was strengthened by an irresistible longing to return to my wicked life. Next Sunday a special collection was taken up, and a large sum realized. Here was my opportunity and my ruin.

“I was detected, and the indecent letter fell into Father D.’s hands. He was horror-stricken and disgusted. He knew I had frequented the Sacraments regularly, although I had never been baptized. He bade me leave the house at once; then, apparently realizing that I would be homeless, told me I might remain until I had found some other place. Therein lay his mistake. If he had driven me from the house at once, in my chagrin I would have left the town

also; but the delay gave me time to think and plot; for seven devils now possessed my soul, which became filled with a deadly hatred against him. I lay awake all night conniving at what I should do.

“A few days before, Father D. had been ill,—an unusual circumstance. The next day I went about among the principal members of the congregation, telling each one in confidence that he had become addicted to drink, and bewailing the unfortunate habit into which, I said, he had fallen through grief at the death of his mother. I added that I feared to remain in the house with him, as when intoxicated he was not himself; and told them I had already begun to make preparations for my departure. These carousals, I reported, took place nightly. The persons to whom I made these revelations were horrified; several expressed doubt of their truth. I had anticipated this, and was prepared for it. I begged that a few of the most responsible men of the congregation should get together any evening they might name, offering to give them ocular proof of my assertions. They named the next evening, Friday.

“My intercourse with Father D. was now confined to bare necessary words. His studied avoidance of me—he would not even look toward my direction—intensified my hatred. I knew all about the use of morphine, and had a quantity in my possession. On Friday evening I put some in his tea. About eight o'clock he came to the dining-room where I was sitting, and said: ‘I am unaccountably sleepy and must lie down. If any one should come, please call me. It is late for visitors, but there might be a sick call.’ He gave me this order, because at night he always attended to the bell himself. I stole on tiptoe to the door, and soon heard him breathing heavily. Then I went to the cellar, brought up some empty bottles which had contained beer—I had drunk it myself,—also one of cheap whiskey, for which I had a certain use. Throwing a shawl over my head, I broke the bottle of whiskey on the floor, in order that the aroma would greet the committee on their entrance, and hurried off to the school-house, where they were awaiting me. They followed me to the house, and saw Father D. stretched upon the lounge in what appeared to be a drunken

sleep. I stood apart, apparently weeping, but really gloating over what I had done. They were all terribly shocked. After they had gone I removed all evidences of intoxication, and went to bed.

"In the morning Father D. said Mass as usual, but was not well all day. On Sunday he must have seen displeasure or aversion in some faces; for he came in at nightfall looking sad and perplexed, and sat for some time after tea at the table, leaning his head upon his hand. That night the tea was drugged also. Some hours later I went to the sitting-room, found him sound asleep in his chair, where he still remained when, at the head of a committee of six, I returned for further demonstration of what I had asserted. I then announced my intention of leaving the ensuing week. After their departure I went to bed, leaving Father D. still in a stupor in his chair. The next day he was ill again, and several times I saw him looking at me with a curious expression. I have always believed that he half suspected me of trying to poison him.

"On Tuesday night my fiendish plan culminated. About eleven o'clock I ran,

half dressed, to a neighboring house, crying that my life was in danger. The gentleman in whose house I took refuge wanted to go at once and summon others, and with them repair to the house of the priest. But with prayers and tears I implored him not to do so, saying it would be better for two or three reliable persons, who had seen Father D. in a state of intoxication, to accompany me to the city where the Bishop resided, and tell him the pitiful story. This was agreed upon. We went next morning, told the tale, and I added accusations which I had hitherto kept back. The Bishop was a good man, but very excitable and easily deceived. My story was so plausible, my distress and sorrow seemed so great, and the evidence of eye-witnesses so clear, that he was at once impressed with the truth of all that was said. He bade the men go home and keep silence, told me to remain in the city until further orders, and sent me to lodge at the Sisters of Mercy.

“Long before Sunday came it had been whispered about that Father D. had fallen into disgrace, although nothing tangible had been revealed to the public. I heard

later that he went about during the week performing his usual duties; showing by his manner that he knew something was amiss, but asking no explanation of the changed demeanor of his people. On Saturday afternoon the Bishop sent for me, questioned me closely, and told me to be in readiness to accompany him to C. next morning. I met him at the depot; two hours later we were in C."

After telling the particulars already related at the beginning of this sketch, the wretched woman continued:

"I did not anticipate that the Bishop would have done any more than give the priest a terrible lecture: I did not think that he would send him away. But when I saw and heard the fearful punishment and disgrace inflicted on him, I felt as Judas must have felt when he threw the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests on the morning of the Crucifixion. I ran to the house and began to gather up my clothes.

"Father D. came in a moment after. I saw him go into the sitting-room, put on his coat, pick up his hat and breviary, and leave the house. He did not take a single

article of clothing; he looked neither to the right nor left as he passed out. Oh! if I had had the virtue or the courage even at that late hour to take back the accusations by which I had ruined him, all might have been well with him again. But I had neither; and because I put away that chance of repentance, my soul will be lost forever. But revenge died in my heart from that hour.

“I left the town, plunged into the dissipation of the great cities, and resumed my old life. Three times I tried to commit suicide. *I* could not die. Many long years I wandered up and down, going from one city to another, till one day, five years ago, I found myself in front of — Cathedral. Something forced me to enter the house. I asked for the Bishop. They told me he was dead. I then inquired for his successor. He came, a young man. But when I told him my story he did not believe me. He had never heard of Father D. He thought I was crazy, and bade me go into the church and pray. But I insisted on the truth of what I said, until finally he arose, made a motion with his hands as though repulsing me, and exclaimed: ‘Go,

go to the church, and ask God to forgive you, if what you have said be true. But I do not believe it for a moment; your brain must be disordered. If it is not, that poor priest must have died. Go away, and do not come here again.' Having found shelter with a respectable old woman, from that time forward I led a decent life. When you and Sister Clara found me, good Mother, sick in that dirty garret, I invented the tale that made you take pity on me and fetch me here. Now go away all of you, and leave me to die like a dog, as I deserve."

But they did not go away. Overcoming the horror that her fearful story had caused, as well as that excited by her physical condition, true to their name and vocation, they redoubled their kindly efforts for her comfort, and besought her, by the infinite mercy of God, to make her peace with Him. Prayers and tears were alike useless. Once more she began to rave and moan, crying out that as she had sinned by the tongue, so was she punished; and reiterating again and again that she was a double murderer, and that for the suicide there could be no salvation.

The good Mother sent for a priest, but the sight of him seemed to intensify her agony. He retired to an anteroom, where he prayed fervently. The good Mother represented to her that God had shown her special kindness in having placed opportunities in the way of her repentance; but all in vain. Her sufferings soon became intense; she called repeatedly for water, with which the Sisters moistened her lips. "My tongue is on fire!—my tongue is on fire!" she would repeat after each slow, painful draught. It was at the solemn hour of midnight that she cried out, after a long silence: "See—see! he is standing there—at the foot of the bed! He is looking at me. His eyes are sad, sad, sad! Ah! I can not bear it!" Covering her face with her hands, her voice died away in inarticulate murmurs; her breath came more slowly, and those who knelt beside her scarcely knew the moment of her departure. So she passed to judgment.

This sorrowful history would not be complete without adverting to a circumstance which occurred several years later, and which may serve as a possible clue to the fate of Father D. The story of the

dead woman was again brought to the notice of the Bishop by the priest who had been present during her last hours on earth. That her former relation of the events which had occurred had impressed itself upon the Bishop's mind was evident from the fact that he said he had been unable to trace the unfortunate priest after a period of five years spent in a monastery at R. He had obtained whatever slight information he possessed from Father Z., an aged priest who had been a close friend of the former Bishop. The present incumbent had appeared anxious to dismiss the subject as one too painful to be dwelt upon, and the clergyman went his way. But the narration had so impressed itself upon his mind, and his sympathies had been so deeply aroused by the terrible recital, that he lost no opportunity of relating it to his brother priests; hoping against hope that the victim of fiendish hate and revenge might still be alive, and that it might thus be possible to make some slight reparation for the injustice that had been done. A few of these had heard a faint echo of the original story; but most of them were young men like himself, unfamiliar with

what had occurred in a generation now passed away.

But one evening, after he had told the story to a friend—a clergyman also, who had just returned from Europe, where he had spent two years on sick leave,—the latter asked, in a tone full of interest:

“What was the baptismal name of that priest? Did you ever know it?”

“It was David,” replied his friend.

“Any middle name?”

“John,—David John. Rather an odd combination.”

“I think your perseverance has been rewarded,” said the other. “Now listen to *my* story. Two years ago—a short time, I should judge, before the occurrence of the final event in the sad story you have told me,—I was travelling in the west of Scotland, in a portion of country but sparsely settled and very poor. I stopped one night with the parish priest of L., with whom I went next morning to visit the graveyard, a rough and primitive spot. As we mused and talked alternately, he pointed to a newly-made grave, saying: ‘There lies a man who had some kind of a history, I know, but I was never able to discover

what it was. He was a countryman of yours; well-read, well-bred, and with that indefinable *something* about him which convinced me from the first that he had once studied for the priesthood. He came here footsore and weary, his clothes in rags, his shoes scarcely holding together on his swollen feet. I was a young man at the time; he may have been a few years older, —say five and thirty at most. When I questioned him he said: "Father, I have committed no crime, but I am a wanderer on the face of the earth. If you will allow me to remain here, in any capacity whatever, free to spend my leisure hours before the Tabernacle, I will serve you until my death." I was much impressed by his manner and evident sincerity. Our old sexton and gravedigger had recently died, so I took him in. Very soon he began to teach the children while the schoolmaster was ill; and when that place became vacant, he filled it also. He was loved by young and old. He spent all his spare hours in the church, occupying a little room in the belfry. Often in the night I have stolen out, to find him kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament. I called him David; the vil-

lagers, Mr. David. I never knew his full name until the day he died. Then I asked him what it was. He looked at me in a strange, sad way, and said: "It is D——; David John D——." I questioned him no further, though I should have been well pleased to know his history.'

"I stooped and read the name, roughly inscribed upon a triangular slab of granite, uncut and unpolished as it had come from the quarries near by,—a rude cross, the name followed by the customary *R. I. P.* That was all. I said: 'And you know nothing more?'—'Nothing,' replied the old priest; 'save that, whatever his former history may have been, here he lived as a saint, and here as a saint he died.'"

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My story is finished. All that is known or conjectured has been told. The rest awaits the Judgment Day.

XX.

MORE THAN BROTHERS.

It was in the early days of the Home for the Aged at C. that two old men came one morning to apply for admission. They were Irish; seemingly about the same age, feeble both, and rheumatic; very poorly but cleanly dressed; of similar height, and not unlike in features and complexion. Confident of a welcome, they had brought their small earthly possessions tied up in red handkerchiefs,—a touching and pathetic sight, as they stood quietly waiting while the good Mother put some necessary questions.

“Are you brothers?” she asked, addressing herself to the one who had been spokesman.

“No,” answered the other, casting an affectionate look at his companion; “but we are more. Dinny here—”

“None of that now,—none of that!” interrupted his companion, hurriedly.

“You won’t forget your promise? You’ve kept it these ten years, an’ you won’t break it now? I’ll do the talkin’; I’m better at it than you,” he continued, with a smile, turning once more to the good Mother. “We’re not brothers, Sister,” he said. “Sure he’s a far better-lookin’ man than me, an’ different altogether. You’ll soon find that out for yourself when you have us here settled.”

“He looks more feeble,” replied the good Mother, turning again to the other; but even as she looked she became aware of another difference, which was more evident as she regarded them both.

“Dinny” seemed to interpret her thought.

“You see, ma’am,” he said, “his two hands are crippled badly; he can’t do much to earn his bit or sup, an’ it’s that way always with him. But I’m strong enough mostly to potter about the garden, if you’ll have me,—barrin’ the times when the rheumatiz lays me up. But I’ll do double work after.”

When they took up their little bundles to carry them to the dormitory the good Mother said:

"One is Dinny, and the other?"

"Michael," was the reply.

"Oh, no, Sister!" interposed Dinny. "'Tis Michael, of course; but he's very different. If you'd call him Mr. McManus 'twould be more fittin'."

"Tut, tut, Dinny!" said the other. "If it is the custom, why should I not be called by my first name? Call me what you please, ma'am," he said, cheerfully. "Michael is not a name to be ashamed of."

"Let it be Michael, then," replied the Sister. "You are all our children here, and it is our desire that you consider yourselves as such; and you are to address me as 'good Mother.'"

"It is a very comfortin' sound," said Dinny, as he trudged along the corridor to his destination. "An' I'm sure you'll act the mother to us, though we're twice as old as you,—maybe more."

When they had deposited their belongings on their respective beds—which, to Dinny's great satisfaction, were placed side by side,—the good Mother offered to conduct them to the men's sitting-room, in order to introduce them to those who were to be their future companions. This

ceremony accomplished, after seeing his friend comfortably seated near the stove, Dinny followed the good Mother to the door, and into the office on the opposite side of the hall.

“Good Mother,” he said,—not without some timidity of manner,—“I’d like a private word with you, if you can spare me a minute.”

“Certainly,” was the reply. “Be seated, Dinny.” And the good Mother, taking a chair herself, indicated another to the old man.

“Thank you kindly, ma’am!” Dinny said; “but I was taught not to sit in the company of my betters,—ladies especially. I’ll be more comfortable standin’, an’ I’ll not keep you long. ’Tis a word in regard to Master—Mr. McManus I’d like to say to you, ma’am. He’s different from me—very different, and I’d like if there could be a little more consideration shown him.”

“I don’t understand you, Dinny,” said the good Mother. “All are alike here—all are well treated. To be sure, in a place like this there are some who have at one time been better off in the world’s goods than others,—better educated and so on;

but when they come here all are on a level. Do you not see that if we were to make a distinction it would naturally serve to create dissatisfaction, even dissension, among the old people?"

"What you say is true, ma'am,—very true," said Dinny, with a sigh; "an' I don't doubt but it'll be all right. 'Tisn't *him* that would want it, ma'am,—not *him*. He's the humblest an' the meekest soul you ever had to deal with. 'Tis only *me*, ma'am, that thought, maybe if you knew his rearin' an' who his people were, you'd see it for yourself. Sister, I'll be honest with you. He's a gentleman,—an *Irish gentleman*, no less. Do you know what that means in the old country?"

The good Mother smiled. "I think I do, Dinny," she said. "And, while I do not doubt that your friend is an exception to the general rule, because his appearance and manner indicate as much, I have found the class of whom you speak more difficult to deal with than any other. I will tell you why. As a matter of fact, they have generally come to misfortune through their own fault, and their morals as well as manners have suffered in proportion. Bear

well in mind, Dinny, that it is only poverty that is recognized as a pass-word here,—poverty and good behavior. It is not what a man *has* been but what he *is* that recommends him to the Home of the Aged. If, as I do not doubt, your friend is what you represent him to be, he is still a gentleman, in spite of misfortune.”

Dinny sighed again. “I suppose you are right, ma’am,” he said; “an’ we’ll leave it in your hands. Those inside seem a decent lot, an’ I’m sure he’ll be well treated. But I’ve somethin’ else to say, ma’am,” he continued, drawing a small purse from his pocket, from which he counted twenty dollars in bills, dimes, and nickels. “There’s a man beyond the river owes me ten dollars. His father died not long since, an’ when the accounts are settled up he’ll be sure to pay,—he’s an honest man. *That* money I’ll present you for yourself, good Mother, as a token that I’m not ungrateful for your kindness in takin’ us in. But *this* money that I’m layin’ in your hand now I’ve scraped and hoarded this long time, unbeknown to *him*. An’ do you know why? For his burial, good Mother. I don’t care what becomes

of me'' (here he gulped down a great sob); but 'twould break my heart an' his if he'd be to be put in the 'poor lot,' with the outcasts and the criminals and those that have no friends. Will you promise to give him a decent burial for this? Can you do it for the money?" The old man's voice trembled, tears stood in his eyes.

"Yes, I can and I *will*, Dinny," replied the good Mother, much affected. "And I will arrange about it at once, in case I should die myself or be removed."

"An' you'il not say a word to him till the right time comes, an' he dyin' ?—for I feel it in my bones I'll go before him; though I'd rather 'twould be the other way—for reasons," said the old man.

"All shall be as you wish," answered the good Mother. "But now what of yourself, Dinny?"

He shook his head and turned away.

"After all, what does it matter?" said the good Mother. "All are laid in consecrated ground. I am sure many a fervent prayer is said over those graves; for our people have a kind heart for the loneliness of poverty."

"True, true," replied Dinny. "Once

the thought of a pauper's grave was terrible to me; but I don't mind it any more, since I know I've saved *him* from it."

Wondering what could be the mysterious tie that united the two old men, yet delicately forbearing to question Dinny further, the good Mother dismissed him.

True to his promise, Dinny gave the extra ten dollars to the good Mother as soon as he received it.

Both men soon became great favorites at the Home, rendering cheerfully all the assistance their age and infirmities would allow. Michael, as he was called, was very quiet and reserved, though polite and pleasant to all. As soon as it became known among the old men that he had received a good education, he became reader and amanuensis to the others. Old copies of *The Pilot* and occasional daily papers were thus perused from beginning to end; while gradually and insensibly, by reason of his superior knowledge and other qualifications, he began to receive the "consideration" for which poor Dinny had pleaded at first. He was frequently addressed as "Mr. McManus" instead of plain "Michael"; was the arbiter in all disputes;

tacitly acknowledged as the one entitled to greatest respect and prominence among the fifty then resident at the Home. Never did ruler bear honors more affably or meekly; never did monarch possess more loyal subjects. And Dinny also shared in this honor and distinction; for the "consideration" shown his friend afforded him much greater satisfaction than it did the recipient. The two old men had not a single outside friend or visitor; yet none had better filled tobacco pouches, or more serviceable pipes,—all furnished by their kindly companions.

A year and a half thus passed, and in the middle of an intensely cold winter several of the old men were stricken with pneumonia; among these was Dinny, and it soon became evident that his days were numbered. His companion watched over him with the greatest solicitude, refusing to take any rest night or day. The poor old man was unconscious nearly all the time, but the day before he died he began to recognize his surroundings. His eye brightened when he saw his friend. He was ready and willing to die, save for having to leave his other self.

"Sure I hoped you'd go first," he said,

wistfully; "so that you wouldn't be alone entirely, an' I'd have the sweet privilege of offerin' a prayer at the grave-side whenever I'd like."

Here the good Mother made a sign to Mr. McManus. "He will relapse into unconsciousness perhaps," she said, "even before the priest can arrive. Say what you have to say, if there be anything." With that she prepared to retire, but Mr. McManus motioned her to remain.

"Good Mother," he said, "it is fitting that you should hear all that is to be said. I wish all the world could hear it. This dear man is my foster-brother; we were nursed at the same breast. When he came to this country forty years ago, young, hopeful, and strong, I also was a young and healthy man. My story is a sad one, —too sad to tell, good Mother. Enough to say that, through no fault of my own, I found myself, after a series of terrible misfortunes, an exile in a strange land—poor, friendless, unknown. I will frankly confess to you that I was about to take my own life when I accidentally met Dinny in the street and recognized him. He did not know me, but I soon made myself

known. He took me home with him to his poor abode,—so poor indeed that he could scarcely find covering or food for himself; but of what he had, and of what he earned during the long year that I was bed-ridden, he gave me the largest share. And so we went along for nine years or more, until we came here. I think I am not mistaken, good Mother, when I say that the keenest of all our misfortunes in his sight was that he could not show me what he considered the respect due my former position in the old country we both once called home. That, good Mother, and the fear that when the end came I should have to lie in a pauper's grave—” Here the old man's voice broke, and throwing himself on his knees beside the dying bed of his faithful companion, he seized the old withered hands in his own.

Dinny's eyes were closed, but tears coursed slowly down his cheeks.

“Dinny!” cried the other, passionately, —“Dinny, do you hear me?”

“I do, Master Mike,—I do!” said the sick man in a low tone. “Don't fret that way. Don't talk to me that way, Michael dear. What less could I do than I done for

you? Ah! weren't you a great comfort to me as well?"

"Listen!" said the other. "I know what dread *you* had for a pauper's grave for yourself. But you won't lie in one, Dinny,—you won't lie in one. You mind when I told you my watch was stolen?—'twas the last thing I had left of the good old times. I stole it myself, Dinny, and I got twenty-five dollars for it; and it's here in my vest pocket, Dinny, and it will get you a decent grave."

The dying man laughed a low, soft, pleased, melodious laugh. "O Master Mike!" he said, looking up at the smiling face of the good Mother. "'Tis a pair of rogues we were. But I'll die happy, for we'll lie together now."

It was reserved till later to inform Mr. McManus of the meaning of Dinny's exultant words. The priest was not too late to prepare the devout soul to meet its Maker. Dinny died next day, quietly, painlessly, after exacting a promise from his friend to tell the good Mother "all the misfortunate story." But he had not the opportunity to do so; for the day after Dinny was laid in the vault—the ground

being covered with snow—Mr. McManus was taken with the same disease that had carried him off, and he died after three days' illness.

The story remained untold; but as much of it as was known so touched the heart of a charitable patron of the Home that he insisted on choosing a pleasant site for the twin graves, where, in the first mild spring weather, the friends and foster-brothers were laid. And there today they lie, under a gnarled old willow-tree, a simple wooden cross above them,—faithful in life, in death not divided. Another instance of the beautiful self-sacrifice and devotion so characteristic of the Irish race.



XXI.

THE LITTLE WHITE OLD WOMAN.

One beautiful summer evening, about five o'clock, on returning from town, I found the children gathered around an old white-haired woman who was sitting on the piazza.

"O mamma, see the little white old woman!" whispered the youngest, as I reached the top of the steps. "She is just like a fairy. See her little sharp black eyes; and she is so funny."

She was indeed a curious-looking old creature, as she leaned back composedly in the great rustic chair, fanning herself with a clean white sunbonnet which she had taken from her head. Her skin was of a pallid whiteness, intensified by the blackness of her small but remarkably brilliant eyes. Her hair, which seemed still abundant, was white as flax. About her shoulders she wore a little white flannel shawl, shrunken from many washings, but

scrupulously clean. Beneath this could be seen a spotless cambric jacket, or short gown, confined at the waist by a long well-starched and well-ironed white apron. Her skirt had originally been of some spotted light calico, but was now faded almost white. It was very short, betraying a pair of old-fashioned stockings and a pair of good, stout, low-cut shoes. Her whole appearance left the impression of spotless cleanliness. She looked at least seventy years of age.

"Good-evenin', ma'am!" she said, as I approached, without waiting for me to speak. "The little children is havin' great sport out of me. I'm tellin' them of an accident I had the day-losin' my bit of change. I was wonderin' how I'd foot it home down the avenue an' through the town across the bridge; for I haven't a penny to go aither by bridge or ferry. I was loath to ax the loan of a dime of any one; but the children looked so cute playin' among the trees that I thought I'd make bould an' ax them would they call their mamma, an' maybe she'd loan me enough to take me over the river some way. Wherever there does be a lot of

little ones, there you'll find kind hearts."

I opened my pocket-book at once and put two nickels in her hand; for, though quite familiar with the old trick of "Please give me three cents to cross the ferry: I've lost my ticket," it never occurred to me to place the request of the old woman in the same category.

"Thank ye, ma'am," she said; "an' may God increase your store! You have a fine little family. 'Tis visitin' a friend on the East Hill I was the day, an' had my money tied in the corner of my handkercher. I thought to walk to the foot of the avenue an' take the car there. 'Twas a good handkercher too. I dislike to be without a handkercher an' the day so warm. The sweat does be rollin' off my face an' I walkin'. Would ye have an ould one ye could give me, ma'am? I'd like one of the master's: them small ones is no good at all."

Her simplicity amused me. I dispatched one of the children for a partially worn handkerchief of their father's, which I gave to the old woman.

"That'll do fine," she said, shaking it out and eying it all over. "There's only

a pin-point of a hole in this end. Oh, 'twill do fine, barrin' the letter"—pointing to the initial in one corner. "Some might think I stole it. There's mane people about, ma'am. My own name's Cunningham" (she pronounced it Cunnigum). Replacing the sunbonnet on her head, she arose to go. Then, as if struck by a sudden thought, she said, wistfully: "Maybe they'd give me a cup of tay in the kitchen. They'll be gettin' the supper ready by now. I lives my lone, an' I'm dead tired, an' 'twill be late when I gets home."

"Certainly you shall have a cup of tea," I answered. "You say you live alone. I hope you are not obliged to work at your age."

She looked at me sharply.

"I works hard—in my own way. But I has a trifle comin' to me every month. I'm not badly off, ma'am, thank ye!"

Having sent her to the kitchen in charge of one of the children, I went upstairs. When I came down to the piazza again she was about to descend the steps. Seeing me, she looked around; and, pointing to a group of red chimneys in the valley below, she asked:

“What place is that, ma’am?”

“That is the Home for the Aged, kept by the Little Sisters of the Poor,” I said.

“What!” she exclaimed, hurriedly and as if in some trepidation. “Would there be any danger of any of them comin’ about at this hour? They’re great vagabonds, so they are.”

“Oh, you must not say that!” I replied. “You can not know them at all, or you would not call them vagabonds.”

“Faith, I knows them only too well,” she retorted; “an’ I meets them often. They’re the bane of my life, so they are. First tryin’ to find out wasn’t I poor, an’ wouldn’t I come to them; an’ now interferin’ an’ even threatenin’ me whenever I meets them. Too well I knows them. Sure they do be turnin’ up everywhere I goes. An’ that’s where they has their Home, is it? ’Tis many a long day again before I’ll take this route; for I’d rather meet an army of sojers than any two of them. An’ ’twas a good day’s work I made of it, too,” she added; “bad cess to them!”

And, without further salutation, she picked her way down the steps. Before

she reached the pavement, I saw her stoop down among the bushes; and when I caught my last glimpse of her she was laboring slowly down the road with a large covered basket on her arm.

I began to suspect that "the little white old woman" was a professional beggar; and this suspicion was confirmed by Mary the cook, a woman of excellent heart but strictly honest principles.

"I don't like that old woman, ma'am," she remarked. "I think she has a dale of impidence; an' she's next door to a thief, besides."

"Why, Mary?" I inquired. "What did she say or do?"

"Well, I sat her down there at the side-table with a clane white napin foreninst her—she looked so clane herself,—an' a fine cup of tay, an' a bit of cold ham and mustard; for the victuals weren't cooked. She sipped the tay, and looked all about her till she spied the custard coolin' through the pantry door beyant; an' says she, pushin' the plate away from her: 'I don't care for coorse food: couldn't ye give me a bit of the puddin'?'—'No,' says I, 'I couldn't. I'll not spoil the looks of it for

the like of ye. If ye were to the fore an' we atin'" says I, 'you'd have your share; but it won't be broke for ye, old lady.' After that, ma'am, she ate her food contented; but when she got up to go away, she came over to the stove where I was seasonin' the soup, an' says she: 'My honest girl, have ye a grain of tay or a handful of sugar ye'd give a poor ould woman?'—'Did the mistress tell ye to ask me?' says I, turnin' about on her.—'No,' says she, 'of coorse she didn't; but 'twill never be missed.'—'Never!' says I, 'while Mary Burns—an' that's my name—is to the fore in this kitchen. Shame on ye, an' be off with ye,' says I, 'for a mane ould woman!' An' what do ye think she did, ma'am, as she went out of the door? She shook her fist in my face. That crathur is a great ould rogue,—I'll lay my life on it."

Confidences exchanged among the servants in the neighborhood proved that Mary was right. The old woman had made the tour of the avenue with the plea of having lost a dime; her age and cleanly appearance having excited such sympathy that she had everywhere obtained the

desired relief. She never returned, and for some months we heard no more of "the little white old woman."

One day, however, the papers were filled with accounts of a clever trick which had been practised by a very old woman, soliciting small loans all over the city. Some one had followed her across the river, where she really resided in a tiny house on the outskirts of C——. Further investigation discovered that she was in the habit of selling handkerchiefs, shoes, gloves, and other articles of clothing, to second-hand dealers in the city, thereby realizing quite a nice sum from her collections. Many valuable trinkets and some jewelry were found in her room; and, shortly after her confession, some were recovered from pawnbrokers.

It was also learned that with the ill-gotten gains which she had acquired in various cities of the United States, going from one to another as she exhausted the resources of each, she had educated and provided for her daughter, a supposedly respectable woman residing in a small town on the Ohio River, married to a railroad engineer, and living in a comfortable house

presented to her by her mother. She denied all complicity in the affair, refusing at first to see her mother; and nothing was proven against her. Thus the old woman, left to the mercy of the law, without friends or paid counsel, was sentenced to imprisonment for three years. There was no doubt in my mind but that the culprit and our former visitor were one and the same, the description and names being identical.

Several years passed; and while visiting a friend in one of the Eastern States, I went to the Home of the Little Sisters of the Poor. As I had a letter of introduction from the good Mother in C——, they gave me the freedom of the place, making me very welcome. One day I came upon an aged woman sitting on a bench under a tree in the sunniest part of the garden. She was the perfection of cleanliness; and as her eyes—small, black, bird-like and brilliant—met my own, I thought I recognized her. From the indifferent look with which she glanced at me, I saw that the recognition was not mutual. But how could that have been expected, as she had seen me but once, and there was nothing remarkable about my personality?

Although I know that the Little Sisters often stretch a point with regard to the lines of respectability to be drawn about their *protégés*, I had an idea that, under ordinary circumstances, they did not give shelter to persons who had served a sentence in the penitentiary; and I felt certain that the old creature had used her sharp wits to good effect in order to gain admittance to the Home. So it was with an expectant curiosity which was not disappointed that I asked, in a casual tone:

"How long have you been here, grandmother?"

"Better than two years, ma'am," was the answer. "An' I'll not be very much longer in it, I'm thinkin'; for I'm an ould woman an' a lonely one."

"How old?" I inquired.

"Turnin' seventy-seven," she said.

"Have you no friends or relatives?"

"One daughter, ma'am," she replied, bitterly; "but she forsook her poor ould mother when she fell into sorrow."

I was now assured of her identity; and I said, at hazard:

"Your face seems familiar to me. Did you ever live in the West?"

She looked at me fixedly for the space of a second. My soul quailed before her.

“Never was I out of New York State since I come from Ireland. There’s many faces alike in the world, ma’am,” she said.

“That’s true. You like being with the Little Sisters?” I inquired, changing the subject.

The small, beady eyes sought mine again, as she answered curtly:

“Indeed then I don’t, ma’am. But ould age an’ poverty forced them upon me. What I likes is a neat little room to myself, where I can be in peace an’ quiet; an’ a neat goffered cap of lawn or muslin cambric, not one of them ould hoods; an’ a fresh white apron every day, instead of them checkered blue ones,—that’s what I’d like.”

I remembered a crisp white apron worn by a neat old woman one day five years ago, and I could not repress a smile.

“Why d’ye laugh, ma’am?” she asked, rather sharply.

“I once knew an old woman who looked very much like you,” I answered; “and she, too, was fond of clean white finery.”

“Well, it wasn’t me, ma’am,” she said, darting fire from her beady eyes. “An’

whoever ye are or wherever ye come from, ye never saw *me* before this blessed day of the world. An' don't ye go for to say ye did naither," she continued, speaking very fast; "unless ye'd be that mane that ye'd try to get a poor crathur out of a home. I sits here my lone all the day, when they lets me; an' I does be thinkin', thinkin' all the time. I only wants to be left alone, ma'am,—please lave me alone."

She looked up at me fearfully, and my heart melted toward her.

"Have no fear of me," I said, kindly. "I would not disturb a hair of your head. I am glad to see that you have found a refuge in your last days."

I dropped a quarter in her hand. She clutched it silently, but looked up with grateful eyes, from which I saw her wipe tears a moment later.

At the turn of the path I met one of the Little Sisters.

"I see you have been talking to poor Mrs. McGeoghegan," she said. "Is she not a clean old creature? When I see them dainty and particular about themselves as she is I often wish we could have a separate department for that kind of people."

“Yes, it seems a pity that you can not,” I remarked. “You say her name is Mc-Geoghegan? Has she always lived hereabouts?”

“I think so,” was the reply. “One of the Passionist Fathers recommended her. He had known her a long time; and, for some reasons which he did not mention, considered her a great object of charity.”

I said no more; but, reflecting that the Passionists travel much and far from East to West, and that there are none more Christlike in their imitation of Him whom they follow, I felt more than ever convinced that the poor wasted creature sitting under the maple-tree was in truth our “little white old woman.”



XXII.

“MARRIED ELIZA.”

“Why do they call you ‘Married Eliza’?” I asked of an old woman who was busy training the morning-glory vines at the back of the kitchen.

She paused to bite off a bit of cord before answering.

“Do not do that,” I said. “You will break your teeth.”

“Sure I have my mouth full of them, ma’am,” she replied, showing me a set of which any young girl might be proud—strong, sharp, and white, without a flaw. “I bites everything with them, cracks hickory-nuts and all kinds. I never feels old. Do ye see my hair?” she continued, pulling off her sunbonnet and showing me an abundant growth of crisp black locks, growing low on her forehead, with scarcely a grey hair among them. But the face was a network of wrinkles, and I knew she must be seventy at least.

“How old are you, Eliza?” I asked.

“Nearin’ seventy-five,” she said. “But I don’t feel my age, not a bit. I wouldn’t come to the Home for a long time after the Sisters asked me. We were great friends always, ma’am. Never a week but they’d drop in on me, and never a week but I had my quarter of a dollar ready for them. At the first beginnin’ they’d try to play off and not come in; but that hurt my feelin’s, and they kept on comin’ when they saw it. Whatever beggin’ I’d deny, I always had a heart for the poor old men and women forced to spend their last days with strangers, on charity. No one knows either when ’twill come to their turn,” she said, moving back a step to admire her work. Then, turning her cheery face full upon me, she went on, with a roguish flash of her bright black eye: “But you were askin’ why they called me ‘Married Eliza.’ ’Tis because I was four times married, ma’am; while the most of them is content with one trial, or maybe two.”

“Four times!” I ejaculated. “Your marriages must have been fortunate to have induced you to try that lottery so often.”

"Sure 'tis a lottery, and that's what it is," was the rejoinder. "I wasn't to say fortunate, neither was I misfortunate altogether; for I reared thirty-two childher, ma'am, in my day, and not one of them my own. I had never a child of my own, thanks be to God!"

"Come, sit here on the bench and tell me all about it; won't you, Eliza?" said I, now thoroughly interested.

"That's what I mean to do, ma'am," she replied, as she accepted my invitation. "'Tis a queer story out and out; and it's often been borne upon me, seein' that, married and all as I was four times, *without any likin' for the state of life*, but seein' it forced upon me, that the Almighty chooses every back for every burthen.

"I was only fifteen the first venture I made, ma'am—or, rather, my grandfather and grandmother made it for me. My own father and mother died when I was a baby. I remember well the day I came in from the fields to my dinner, and the strange man standin' on the floor. Sure I had never so much as thought of any one courtin' me. I was a great hand for little childher always; and they'd follow me about all over beggin'

for stories, and havin' me make play toys with bits of paper and tin and all. 'This is the *colleen*,' says my grandfather; and the strange man took my hand. 'She's a fine handful of a girl,' says he. And before I knew where I was the priest was in it, and we were married, and off to Drumskinla, forty miles away. 'Twas somethin' to do with a debt my grandfather owed him, and that's the way they settled it. He was more than fifty years, and had five little childher at home. The oldest was ten, maybe; the baby but three months.

“Tim Daily was a good enough husband to me, but it's a hard life I had doin' for the young ones; though they were very fond of me, and I of them. Ten years we lived together, till he died. The famine came then, and times was dreadful hard. Many went to America in them days. Myself and the oldest girl and boy thought it the best plan. We left the three younger ones with some of their relations, and promised to send for them. Nora and myself got work in one family, and lived in it three years. We put the boy to a trade, payin' his board between us till he'd be out of his time. Poor Jamesie, he took the

cholera when it was bad in '50, and died after a few hours' sickness.

"After we had his buryin' paid for and a few pounds saved, we sent for the other childher. I took a couple of rooms, and when they came over had a place for them to lie down. The three of them went out to service, and soon after that Nora married. She only lived a year, and left me two little twins to mind. And it's left to me they were indeed; for the poor father was killed a short time after in the rollin' mill, along with five others that lived in the buildin'.

"There was a man there that had a fine wife, but she died and left five small childher. He was drawin' good wages; and, seein' how well I did for my own, he bothered and coaxed me till I married him; and that made ten, countin' the three that was livin' out. They weren't for it at all. But I reminded them how I did the same for themselves when they were poor little motherless creatures, and they hadn't much to say again it after that. Well, they were all good childher, and their father was as kind to the twins as he was to his own. One by one the girls I brought out from Ireland married and went out West. I

never heard tale or tidin's of any of them since.”

“And the twins?” I asked. “Did they do nothing to provide for them?”

“Oh, the creatures! how could they?” Eliza replied. “Who could expect it of them? Anyhow, the twins always seemed nearer to me than they did to their mother's people. Bill Brady—that was my second husband—was a consumptive man, and he had to give up workin' in the gas house on account of it, and do any odd job he'd find about. Times was harder after that, though a couple of the little girls went livin' out. When he died it was very close livin' with us.

“About the same time that Bill died Mary Buckley died. She was the wife of the man that rented the buildin' entire and let it out again in rooms. He was a dacint, middle-aged man; a little cross now and then, but honest and a good Christian. Nine childher his wife left him to provide for and take care of. Five of them was boys, and growin' a little wild without a mother. Nothin' would do him—after a dacint time of mournin'—but that I should marry him and take care of his nine along

with my own. Three fine rooms he had—the choice of the buildin',—and they were convenient to my own. As I had the most care of them since their mother died any way, I gave my consent. And I didn't feel the difference, such a fine lot of childher they all were. And they minded me so well; and some of them, along with my own seven, doin' a little for themselves; and the rest of them, down to the smallest, helpin' with the work. I couldn't tell ye which was the best, ma'am, nor which I liked best. The boys that were workin' were forever buyin' me a handkerchief or a little shawl or a cap ribbon; and the little girls, when they'd come home from their places of a Thursday or a Sunday, would hand me a dollar or two now and then. They were a fine lot of childher; I had great comfort with them."

"Did you sew and cook and wash for all those children, Eliza, without any help?"

"Why not, ma'am? Of course I did. I had all the help they could give me, and I was always a good hand at the needle. I'd never want any better play than to be plannin' and patchin' and sewin'. The ladies where the girls lived gave me many

a half-worn gown, and often trousers and jackets to fix over for the boys. Buckley was a fine scholar, ma'am; and 'twas often and often midnight found him readin' the newspaper or the Lives of the Saints, or maybe 'Shandy Maguire'; and me sewin', while the childher was asleep.”

“And were they not ill sometimes?”

“Not often, ma'am; but if they were, no one could take better care of them than me. I was always a great hand at nursin', ma'am.”

“I am sure you often found it hard to make both ends meet, Eliza, with such a large family,” I said.

“I did, I did; but I was always a fine hand at makin' up tasty dishes out of little or nothin'. Sure you couldn't find a happier woman in the town while Buckley lived. But all good things must have an end on this earth, and my cross was comin' to me. He died very sudden of a Sunday, after comin' home from ten o'clock Mass.” After a pause, during which she wiped away a tear, Eliza continued: “Buckley was such a fine man! He had great taste in clothes. He always wore red flannel in the winter time for the rheumatism, but there

was a kind of knitted soft grey goods that does be hangin,' made up, in the windows of the gentlemen's furnishin' stores, and he had a great mind for that. 'Eliza,' he said to me many's the time, 'I think the feel of them soft grey goods would be fine on one's limbs. I've a wish for a suit like that, Eliza, only they're too dear.'

"The mornin' after he died I rose early and made me way down to Fourth Street, and I bought him one of them suits of underwear—and I paid seven dollars for it, so I did,—and made them put it on him in the coffin. 'Twas the least I could do for him. He had a grand funeral, eight of the finest-lookin' men of the Holy Family parish carryin' him; and Father Brown cried tears down out of his eyes, so he did, and he preachin' the sermon. I paid forty dollars for the habit that was on him."

"He left you comfortable, then?" I said, judging from the lavish expenditure of the funeral that he had had something laid by.

"And where would he get the money to leave me comfortable, ma'am?" she inquired, looking at me with something akin to impatience in her black eyes.

“Sure he had only his day’s wages. We only got our rent free out of the buildin’. No, ma’am. It took me and the boys a good year to pay the expenses; for I had to go out to the house-cleanin’ and washin’ after he died. But we managed to get along.”

“And you still kept the children?”

“To be sure I did. What else would I do? But some of them was doin’ for themselves, and handin’ me some of their earnin’s when they could spare it. But little by little they scattered too. One went here and one went there, and I lost track of the whole of them, only the twins, and I reared them to be good scholars.”

“What became of them, Eliza?”

“They went to the war, ma’am, and the rebels killed the pair of them,” she replied, wiping another tear.

“And the others, who were married and settled—did you hear nothing from them or receive nothing from them?”

“’Twas a strange thing,” she answered, reflectively, “and I often thought about it; but somehow they all went to distant parts, except one of the Buckley girls that married a young fellow of the Barnes. They were close people, the whole of them,

though well off; and he wouldn't let her come nigh me, because I lived in an alley, and for fear she'd be given me somethin'. But sure I never blamed her: she couldn't help herself. A woman should be said by her husband."

"And how did you happen to marry a fourth time, Eliza?"

"Well, it was this way. An old man and woman came to the buildin', and she had the consumption. Waitin' on her and tendin' her, I got to be well acquainted with the two of them. She was awful fond of him. She had a bit of money—a pension—that supported them. He had some kind of a pain in his back that kept him from hard work. Well, nothin' would do her and she dyin' but that I'd promise to marry him, if he asked me, she was that fearful of leavin' him alone. It wasn't long till he did ask me. I had a great pity for him, he was so helpless, and so I married him. He was a very delicate man, and used to good eatin'; his stomach was the weakest I ever knew. Many's the time and I out washin' I'd slip the apple or orange I had for my dessert in my pocket, and sometimes a bit of pie wrapped up in

a paper, or a taste of cake to tempt him. And he'd enjoy that, ma'am,—he'd enjoy that. A taste of corn beef or cabbage he'd never put into his mouth, nor boiled ham nor bacon. Nothin' at all but the tenderloin steak could be swallowed in the way of meat. He couldn't touch an egg unless he knew it came direct from the country or somewhere that they kept chickens. There was one woman I washed for and she always had a few fresh eggs for me—for John. Particular he was about his linen too, ma'am. He had the whitest of shirt bosoms, ma'am, whatever mendin' might be on the back of them. And his clothes—well, I kept them brushed to a nicety; he looked like a real gentleman, so he did.”

“And was there no work of any kind that he could do, Eliza?” I asked, as she looked at me with a touch of reminiscent pride in her eye.

“Scarcely any, ma'am,” she replied. “His back was very troublesome, so I managed to do for us both. Sometimes he'd get a job of puttin' in a load of coal or wood, or mowin' a lawn, or scrubbin' a sidewalk; but the poor man would be sure to break down in the midst of it, and come

home to me to go and finish it for him. And that was so mortifyin' to him, ma'am, that finally I wouldn't let him try to work. I was able for the both of us."

"And how long did he live?" I asked, wondering what period of probation had been allotted her with the lazy fellow, whom she did not seem to suspect of anything worse than feebleness.

"He's livin' yet, for all I know," was the cheerful reply.

"You did not leave him?" I observed. "Surely you could not have lost compassion for him in the end, you kind-hearted, long-suffering creature?"

"'Twas he left me, and small blame to him," she said. "It turned out that he had a married niece in Cleveland very well to do, and she had the givin' of a place in the Old Men's Home there."

"At the Little Sisters?"

"No, but the Protestant Home. He was an Irish Protestant, ma'am, and never turned; though I got him to go to two missions, and brought him round to the Fathers four or five times. But sure we mustn't judge our neighbors. His early trainin' was too strong, ma'am; and, you

know, there's them that's outside the pale that's acknowledged to be in the bosom of the Church—the true Church.”

“So he went to Cleveland?”

“He did, ma'am. Not to shame him there, I worked my fingers to the bone to get him a new suit and a good change of socks and underclothin'.”

“Who paid his fare?”

“I did that, ma'am, too, cleanin' out the railroad office.”

“And he was willing to go?”

“Oh, yes! Why wouldn't he? Myself was gettin' a little old, and the buildin' was no place for the likes of him. I often felt sorry for him, with the smell of the gutter and the noise of the childher—the buildin' is full of them,—and his stomach was weak. 'Tis said that dyspepsia affects the nerves, along with other things.”

“Do you often hear from him?”

“Never, ma'am. Sure I can't read writin', and he was that proud I knew he'd never be trustin' the readin' of his letters to a stranger, nor have me writin' at second-hand. No, I never hear from him.”

“After he went, I suppose you lived alone until you came here?”

"I did for a few years, ma'am; but there was two sick old women in the buildin' livin' together in a bit of a room. They had ten dollars a month between them. Their room was next to mine, and I did all I could for them between fits of the rheumatism that kept me from workin' steady. They had both been with the Little Sisters, but they were queer and wouldn't stay. They'd quarrel with others, but yet they liked each other."

"And how were they with you?"

"Well, they were old, ma'am; and I didn't mind them, the creatures, nor what they did."

"Oh, no! nor such little pleasantries as putting her things out on the landing while she was away at work," said Sister Emilia, who had been an attentive listener for five minutes or more. "When we found her there for the third time, her poor hands swollen with rheumatism, while she begged them through the keyhole to let her in that she might tidy up the place and make their tea, Sister Jeanne Marie and I took advantage of our opportunity and carried her off that same evening."

"Oh, but you're the rogue, Sister dear,

listenin' to my story and I not knowin' it! But that was the way of it, ma'am," she added, with a bright smile that seemed to transfigure her wrinkled old face, illumined by the steady light of generous self-sacrifice and unconscious heroism.



XXIII.

THE SECRET OF A SORROWING HEART.

Mrs. Casey and I were very good friends, and I enjoyed very much an occasional chat with her. Her conversation was a quaint blending of beautiful simplicity and a gentle shrewdness, which, within her limitations, betokened her a keen observer of men and things; while a wise charity characterized all she said.

One pleasant summer morning, invited by her kindly nod and smile, I took a seat beside her on the south piazza, where she sat knitting the soft grey stockings that furnished her constant employment.

“I wonder if your thoughts are as busy as your hands?” I inquired, as she made room for me on the bench beside her.

“Mostly they are,” she replied. “I think a great deal, ma’am; but I never let my thoughts get away with me entirely. Times when they’re not so pleasant—for there’s many a thing to sadden an old

woman like me—I call a halt on them.”

“And what do you do then?”

“Oh, I take a little stroll down into the garden, or give a hand in the kitchen if they’re busy, or maybe steal into the chapel for a visit. ’Tis a comforting thing to have Our Lord so near.”

She smiled up at me brightly, but I heard the echo of a half-breathed sigh.

“How long have you been with the Little Sisters?” I inquired.

“Close on eleven years,” was the reply.

“I’m nearing seventy-three.”

“You have no relatives?”

“I have one son, ma’am, if he isn’t dead by now?”

“And he never comes to see you?”

“He doesn’t know whether I’m living or dead, ma’am.”

Feeling that I had been trespassing on delicate ground, I refrained from questioning her further. Apparently, my curiosity had no depressing effect upon her, for presently she said:

“’Twas a sudden notion brought me here,—a freak maybe you’d call it; but I’d do it over again if I had it to do. I was busy and happy enough before I came, and I’m

busy and happy enough where I am. The bit and sup of charity from a stranger isn't half as hard to swallow as when it's doled out to you by your own, or those that ought to be your own. There's an old proverb I mind well. I think of it often. I'll engage you have heard it many a time:

'A son is a son till he gets a wife,
But a daughter's a daughter all her life.'

I've had sorrowful proof of that, ma'am. Some may talk as they will about the man being the head of the house and the master; it doesn't hold good always,—only seldom. Some tyrants of men are leaders, and a woman's heart is broken with that kind. Thank God there are not so many of them, after all! I don't believe there are, only when the drink makes them so; and even then many a drinking man is decent when he's in his sober senses. A woman doesn't feel so hard against him—that way. As a rule, I think the woman is the real head of the house. A sensible man knows his wife's advice is to be taken; and a weak, shiftless one is often kept under by a strong-natured woman. I've seen it in a long life, ma'am; it's nearly always the way. I

often wonder what will be the end of those Women's Rights if they get their way. 'Twould be a sad thing if they'd get the upperhand of the men. I hope to God it may not turn out that way. What do you think, ma'am? You're not for them, of course?"

Having heartily assured her that I was not in sympathy with the New Woman, I ventured to ask a question, with the intention of diverting her thoughts to the original subject.

"You had a daughter once, Mrs. Casey?"

"I did, ma'am," she answered; "and a good child she was. Herself and the boy came to America together, and I followed them four years after, when they had a little home for me. Katie was a milliner, and John had learned the machinist trade in Ireland. We were respectable people in the old country, where it costs money to learn a trade or a business; and their father did well by them both. But times got hard, and he died. Sometimes, when I think over it all, I feel as if I'd like to speak to somebody. I hope I don't tire you, ma'am, with my old talk."

"Far from it, Mrs. Casey," I answered.

"You know that I sympathize with you; and, then, a confidence often relieves an overburdened mind."

"Yes," said the old woman, thoughtfully. "I may as well tell you the rest; though maybe you'll think worse of me when you've heard it."

"Oh, no!" I replied. "Do not fear that, Mrs. Casey. We all make mistakes now and then."

"That is so," she rejoined. "Well, as I was saying, my husband died, and that is how we all came to America. 'Tis the same story many a one has to tell. The children made a comfortable home for me in R.—. Katie earned fifteen dollars a week, and John eighteen or twenty. He was a very promising lad, always reading machinery books, and once he found what was wrong with a machine when the experts gave it up. After that the master sent him about the country mending and repairing; and then by degrees he began to leave off practising his religion. Then he invented some kind of a screw, and was a long time trying to get some one to invest money in it. He found a man at last, and a bigoted Protes-

tant he was, with a family of dashing girls. This was in Memphis, Tennessee. The end of it all was that he married and prospered greatly. But he didn't write to us often after that; though when he did he was never without sending a gift of money.

“Katie and myself got on nicely; but one cold winter she had an attack of pneumonia, and it left her lungs delicate. She began to spit blood, and that frightened me. I wrote to John, but received no reply for a month or more. Then he wrote asking us to come and make a visit with him; for he said the South would be good for Katie. She wasn't for going; but I thought of her and her alone, and persuaded her; telling her 'twould do no harm to try it. So at last she consented. I wrote to John then that we'd go, and he sent us the money to pay our travelling expenses. We hadn't seen him for ten years, and when he met us at the wharf he was greatly changed. His face was long and peaked, and his hair was grey; and, though he was finely dressed, he didn't look near so happy as in the days when he was working at his trade.

“When we went home to his fine house the wife was very stiff. She was all in

silks and ribbons—for 'twas of a summer's evening,—but to my mind she had a common look. She couldn't compare with my sweet, pale, soft-voiced Katie. She took us up to our room, and told us to go to bed, as she would tell a couple of children. But the night was fine, and I thought I'd say my Rosary in the garden; so, after Katie was asleep, I stole down. The moon and stars were shining bright, and the scent of the flowers delicious. I sat down on a bench beneath a kind of balcony, to say my prayers. I hadn't been there long till I heard footsteps on the porch above me. They didn't see me, and I couldn't get up without their finding me out; so I was obliged to hear every word. It was John and the wife.

“‘Mr. Casee,’ said she, giving the name the queerest sound, ‘why didn't you tell me how Irish your mother was? The girl is well enough, but the old woman is just terrible. I can't let any of our friends know she's belonging to us.’

“‘I trembled for fear of the answer he'd make, but he only said:

“‘Now, Sarah, try to be reasonable. My mother is a fine old woman, and I am

not ashamed of her. She will not trouble you. I didn't mean her to see you at all; but now that she's here, you will have to make the best of it.'

"'And introduce her to my friends?'" said she, with a sneering laugh.

"John was silent for a few minutes, and then he answered:

"'No, Sarah, you needn't trouble about that. She won't put herself forward.'

"'Hm! she won't! I fear she will. I just fancy I can see her coming into the parlor in that big white cap.'

"'Say no more about my mother, Sarah,'" he retorted; and then they went in, and all was quiet again.

"I stole up to the room. Katie lay fast asleep, breathing softly as a little child. If it hadn't been for her I'd have gone out into the night and darkness that minute; for my heart was hurt and my pride was strong. But I knew how it would be if I told her the sorrowful tale; and 'twas only for her that I lived at all.

"I went to my bed comforted. I was up at the break of day, but Katie still slept on. When I saw how pale and thin she looked, and felt the fresh breath of the morning

stealing in through the window, and the scent of the flowers—for the garden below was full of them,—I said to myself: 'O my darling, I'll bear a deal for your sake!' So I went downstairs, hoping to meet John; for he was always an early riser. And I did meet him, sure enough, coming out of one of the rooms.

"'Good-morning, mother dear!' said he, with an affectionate smile and taking my hand tenderly. 'I'd like to have a few words with you before the others are up.'

"'Very well, my son,' said I, stepping out onto the porch.

"'He followed me and asked for Katie.

"'She's sleeping nicely, poor girl!' I replied,—'better than she has slept for a long time.'

"'I'm glad of it. Come, mother, we'll walk about a little; the morning's fine.'

"'Well, I knew that he wanted to get out of hearing of any one in the house; but I went along with him, and after a while he said:

"'Mother, my wife is a very bigoted Protestant, and all her friends are the same. When I wrote asking you and Katie to come, I thought she'd be away North for

the summer with a party of friends. But the plan was broken off before I had time to let you know.'

"'Well, John dear?' said I, waiting.

"'I've been thinking it might be more pleasant if you and sister Katie would occupy a small cottage that's vacant just around the corner. I could go to see you there—and it would be better every way.'

"'Yes, John dear,' said I, 'it would. We'll be glad to go. It will be pleasanter in every way. But, my son, don't let your poor sick sister know we're not welcome here.'

"'What do you mean, mother?' said he.

"'I was always a woman of few words,' I answered. 'That you know without my telling you. When can we go?'

"'Maybe it would be better to go soon—before you've unpacked your trunk. The place is all in order. In fact, I own it myself, mother. The tenant went out only last week. And you will at least have peace.'

"'The sooner the better, John,' said I, giving his hand a little squeeze; for I pitied him from my heart.

"'Well, I made it all right with Katie,

telling her the house would be full of company, and making out 'twas my own proposition to have a nice little place to ourselves. I made an excuse to ask for Katie's breakfast in the room, and we ate together. By nine we were in the cottage, and a pretty place it was. Not a sight of the Madam did we get before we left. She was in the parlor talking to some one as we passed out. But I heard her say. 'An old Irish woman and her daughter'; and by that remark I knew she meant to deny us altogether.

"Three months we spent in that little house, till Katie faded away like a flower out of my arms and went to heaven. Never once did that woman put her foot across the threshold, but every night John would steal in for a few minutes. He provided well for us, and was very kind and affectionate when he came. But I couldn't deceive Katie long. Very soon she saw through it all, and was longing to get back home, where we'd be independent again as we were before. Nothing grieved us like seeing John pass the door of a Sunday going to the Baptist church along with his wife.

“Well, to shorten my story, we fell in with a kind priest, and he came regularly to see my girl till she died. She went without a struggle or a pang. One morning I was busy in the kitchen, and she sitting at the open window in a big willow chair with a cushion at the back. It seemed a long time since I heard a sound from her, and I went in. There she was dead, a sweet smile on her lips and her Rosary between her fingers. Did I weep and wail, ma’am? Oh, no! My heart was rejoiced to see her out of pain and trouble; to know that neither of us would have to eat any longer the bitter bread that was choking me every day. I closed the doors and locked them, and laid her out with my own hands. I put on her my own habit that I had laid away, and then I went to the undertaker. I knew the train left at two o’clock that day, and I was bound to get away on it. Her birthday occurred three days before. That evening John came in and put a hundred-dollar bill in her hand; and it wasn’t the first time he did the like. I had some little savings besides, so it was easy enough for me to have everything done in time. I don’t

know what you'll think of me, ma'am, or whether I did right or wrong; I can't be sure about it myself till this day. But all I wanted was to get away. I didn't want to see John again, and I had my wish.

"When the train left that day I was on board, with my precious girl in her coffin in the freight-car behind me. Here I brought her, and here I buried her in the little cemetery. The neighbors were kind. I don't know what they thought, but they asked me no questions; for I was always to myself, and never intimate with any one. For a while I potted along alone; but my health failed greatly, and I had no trouble in getting into the Little Sisters. I knew the good Mother well."

"And your son?" I asked. "What did he have to say about it?"

"I never had a line from him, for he didn't know of my whereabouts. Oh, he was well enough himself, ma'am; but 'tis likely he was vexed with me for what I did, and the wife had the upperhand."

"And you never wrote to him?"

"I did not, and—God forgive me!—I never wished to."

"But you forgive him?"

“If praying for him day and night be forgiving, I do that ma’am. No son could have been better to his mother under the circumstances; but he was false to his God and his holy religion.”

“And you would like to see him? In your heart of hearts you long for him sometimes?”

She raised her tearful eyes to Heaven and clasped her hands with a passionate fervor as she replied:

“Oh, never! never! I know you won’t understand,—you can’t understand. The Lord will pardon me,—I know He will; for He knows—He knows what a cross it is to a broken-hearted mother.”

She was right: I could hardly understand; but the God on whom she relied so confidently—surely He understood.



XXIV.

MADAME PERRET'S SECRET.

Small, dark, rather sharp-featured, with luminous black eyes which time and sorrow had but faintly dimmed, Madame Perret, distinguished as "the proud Frenchy" by some of her less exclusive companions at the Home of the Little Sisters, was polite to all, but intimate with none. For many years she had been a French teacher in C., earning a respectable if scanty sustenance; but, as new-fashioned methods which she would not adopt began to supersede the old, her pupils gradually became fewer in number, until step by step she descended to the lowest depths of poverty. Unable to work, with no provision for her old age, she presented herself at the Little Sisters' one day, asking for admission.

"I will be frank with you," she said to the good Mother. "I have had the choice between coming here and going to the Home for aged gentlewomen, where some

kind ladies, my former pupils, could and would have found me a place."

"You are not a Catholic, then?" said the good Mother. "In that case it is strange that you do not prefer the other Home, where you could at least have found more congenial associates. For I presume you know, Madame, that our people belong, for the most part, to the humbler ranks of life."

The old woman smiled sadly as she made answer:

"I know all about it. It is enough to say that I am from Lyons. I knew your Sisters very well when I was a little girl. Often have I gone to the convent with alms from my mother."

"And yet you are not a Catholic,—are you, Madame?"

"Why do you think that I am not a Catholic, Mother?"

"I infer from what you say of your connections here that you are not one."

The old woman hesitated. At length she replied:

"No, I can not call myself a Catholic, although I believe in your religion. I may as well tell you at once, Mother, that I was

baptized in that faith; yet there are reasons why I can not participate in its Sacraments."

"God is so good!" said the cheerful little French nun. "He is very, *very* good, Madame. Perhaps, in His wise providence, He is sending you to us that you may be a real Catholic at the end. May it not be so?"

The old woman slowly shook her head.

"No," she sighed. "Although I should wish it, I am afraid that can never be. I have delayed too long. However, here I prefer to live and die, if you will receive me."

"Very well," replied the good Mother. "But you know at the other Home you would have a room to yourself, while here there is a dormitory in common. I suppose you understand—"

"Yes, yes," rejoined the other, somewhat petulantly; "I know all that. Kind as you are, you can scarcely realize how great is the sacrifice of my privacy. I love to be alone; for many years I have lived, hoped, sorrowed, despaired alone. To be alone—oh, what a luxury it is! And yet amid a thousand alien souls one can always

be in solitude if one wishes, I think. Is it not so?"

"You are right," said the Mother. "I thought only of your comfort, Madame. You may come to us whenever you will."

"Thank you, good Mother. I shall try not to give the least trouble to the Sisters. I can sew a little still, and I will do all I can to help "

She came next day, and proved a model inmate. No complaint of any kind was ever heard of her or from her lips. While unfailing in her attendance at the chapel, she was never seen to kneel or to make the Sign of the Cross. But her lips often moved as if in prayer, and at the Elevation and Communion it was noticed that she always bowed her head reverently over her clasped hands.

Madame Perret had been with the Little Sisters about three years, when some changes were made in the community. The Mother Superior (a Frenchwoman) was removed, and another (an American) sent in her place. But the latter also spoke excellent French, having made her novitiate in Europe, at the mother-house, as is the custom in the Order. Madame Perret was

at once drawn to her, and the attraction was mutual. The Mother pitied the delicate, refined old lady, driven by poverty to spend her last years in an abode of charity.

One lovely holiday afternoon, as her companions walked about the garden or sat on benches under the trees, Madame Perret, seated in an old rocking-chair near the kitchen door, slightly leaning back, was drumming quickly with her fingers on her knees, as one might on an imaginary organ or piano.

The good Mother was passing. She paused and said:

"Madame Perret, now I know of whom you remind me. Ever since I came, when I looked at you I saw a resemblance to some one whom I once knew; it seemed to me very long ago. Now I know that it was my kind old music-teacher, Sister Margu rite, at the convent of N. She was the busiest person I ever knew; and if once in a great while her hands chanced to be idle, she would drum with her fingers so—just as you are doing."

The old woman looked at her calmly for a few moments.

"I think it is a pity," she said, "that you have no music in your chapel. It would be so enlivening to the old people, and an incentive to devotion as well."

The good Mother smiled and shrugged her shoulders.

"Whatever I may think," she replied, "I have nothing to say. It is our rule. You are a musician?"

Madame Perret shook her head.

"Because I make a little motion with my fingers like this you think I am a musician, perhaps? No, no, Mother! I have not touched a piano for thirty years. And you—if I am not too bold?"

"Once I played pretty well," replied the good Mother.

"Again may I ask where you received your education?"

"With the Sisters of — at N."

"They are a fine community," said the old woman, with emphasis. "Giving their whole souls to their work, they know neither fear nor favor; always courteous and gentle, yet having all the reserve and dignity necessary to true religious; and remarkable above all things, I should say, for the spirit of detachment, which pre-

serves them from worldliness. Into that congregation, at least, the spirit of the world has not yet crept—or had not when I knew them, many years ago."

"They are still the same," answered the good Mother. "Next to my own community, I love them best."

"And your old music-teacher, of whom I remind you,—does she still live?" inquired Madame Perret, carelessly.

"She—why, how one forgets! I do not know. And it was such a wonder at the time. There was something strange about it. One day she was there, the next morning gone, without a good-bye or a word. The Sisters said nothing; but the rumor spread somehow that she had suddenly become insane and had been taken to an asylum. But we were not allowed to speak of it at all; though we missed her, for she was a sweet, gentle creature."

"And you, good Mother," said Madame Perret, apparently indifferent to the fate of the poor nun,—“how did you, with your talents, happen to join the Little Sisters instead of a teaching order?"

"My talents!" laughed the Mother. "They are few, Madame, I assure you."

But if it had not been for my eyes I should not, perhaps, have thought of the Little Sisters. For a time I was almost blind, and my sight is very imperfect still. God so ordained it."

The old woman looked at her intently. Then she lifted the Sister's hand and raised it to her lips.

"Blessed are they who follow, without turning back, the way which God has ordained for them," she said.

"Amen!" replied the other fervently, patting the withered old hand. "You are such a good creature," she said, wistfully. "If you only would be a Catholic!"

The old woman smiled, still looking into her face.

"Thank you, good Mother, for the undeserved praise. I am Catholic enough, at least, to ask for your prayers."

"Trust me, you shall have them," replied the Sister, about to turn away.

"Wait a moment, Mother!" pleaded the old woman. "With those dark glasses I can not see your eyes. But they should be large and prominent and a bright blue."

The good Mother laughed merrily.

"You have guessed right, Madame."

As she turned the corner of the house, well out of sight and hearing, Madame Perret leaned back in the rocking-chair.

"Yes, little Fanny Donnelly, I am sure," she whispered to herself, and there were tears upon her cheek.

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A sudden cry in the night, a hurrying of feet, a knock at the door of the good Mother.

"Good Mother, come quickly! Madame Perret is dying!"

A few moments later she was standing beside the bed of the old woman, who seemed to be breathing her last, so still so white she lay on the blood-stained pillows. She had had a hemorrhage—the third since the beginning of the winter, when a slight cold had developed into a severe bronchial cough. But soon a faint color came to her cheeks again, and she opened her eyes. They sought the good Mother's face.

"Pray! pray!" she implored.

"I *am* praying,—we are all praying every moment," was the reply. "They have gone for the doctor. You will be better soon, Madame."

“Not for that,” murmured the old woman,—“pray not for that, but for my soul.” Her eyes closed, and she lapsed into silence.

Swiftly and noiselessly the Sisters sent the frightened old women, who surrounded their dying companion, back to their beds. Another bed was being prepared in the infirmary for the sufferer, to which she was soon borne by tender hands. The doctor came, enjoining perfect quiet, and giving some slight remedy in case she should have another attack. But he gave no hope of recovery. She was too weak and old, he said. The good Mother sat beside her until the first gray light of morning stole through the window; then, motioning the waiting Sister to take her place, she went to the chapel, where she remained until the Sisters assembled for Mass. When she returned to the infirmary, Madame Perret was sleeping quietly. She had hoped to have been able to call the priest to the bedside, but hesitated, not knowing Madame Perret's wishes. It was ten o'clock when she opened her eyes at last. Pathetic, pleading, anxious beyond description, they looked into those of

the good Mother, just entering the room.

"Stay with me; it will not be for long," she murmured, grasping the kindly hand and pressing it close to her bosom.

"I shall not leave you," replied the good Mother. "And, O dear Madame, will you not permit me to send for a priest?"

"Not yet," said the other. "Wait until you have heard me. What does the doctor say? Will it be soon?"

"I can not tell," rejoined the Sister. "You must be kept perfectly quiet he says. It will not be well for you to speak."

"I *must* speak. What do a few hours matter? I will speak slowly. I must tell you before I die. My story may be of benefit to others; they may learn what deceit and pride can do to a soul—to a life. Tell it when I am gone, good Mother. It may be some reparation."

These few words had exhausted her. The good Mother gave her a little wine and water, which revived her. And then, in short, broken whispers, with many pauses, the hand of the Sister fast held in both of hers, she told her sorrowful story.

"Good Mother," she said, "I was born in Lyons sixty-five years ago. I am not

so old as I look, but I have had many sorrows, such as wreck the soul and early wear out the body. I was a gay, proud girl, fond of pleasure and fine apparel and costly living. My parents were well-to-do; they reared me piously, but I was never really pious. My heart was full of thoughts of the world. Pride was my besetting sin. I could brook neither interference nor advice. My soul was a total stranger to contradiction or humiliation of any kind. I became engaged to a young man of good family. Both our parents were anxious for the match. He was gay like myself, handsome and rich. I did not care particularly for him, and I was aware that his affections had been placed elsewhere; but that gave me little concern. On the very day when our marriage was to have taken place he eloped with the girl he loved, taking twenty thousand francs belonging to his father. They came to America. You are aware, no doubt, that in France such a proceeding meant for me social banishment forever. My pride was crushed to earth. That very night I made a vow to become a nun. I succeeded in deceiving everybody, even my confessor, with the

belief that I had a vocation; and I entered the novitiate of the Sisters of — at the end of a year.

"During the eight years of my conventual life they had but one fault to find with me—viz., that I was too passive in my manner; although that was laid to what was supposed to be my spirit of renunciation and mortification. You may think it strange, almost impossible, that I could have misted experienced mistresses into such a belief, when in reality my soul was a seething volcano of pride and selfishness; but I assure you such was the case. I was sent to America, where I remained about five years in the convent at N. Your hand trembles, good Mother—you know who I am? Well, shall I go on?"

The Mother bowed her head.

"The trials of my novitiate had been few. It may be that the spirit of resistance and rebellion was dormant during those years. But a very little thing revealed of what stuff I was made. Or, maybe, the time had come when Our Lord could not endure the hypocrite in the abode of His chosen daughters any longer; for they were a perfect community.

“One evening I stood in the music-room, holding a little pearl crucifix between my fingers. It was of beautiful workmanship, and had that day been given me by a devoted pupil. The superior passed. I showed it to her. After admiring it, she suggested that I send it as an offering to a bazaar about to be held in one of our convents in France to raise funds for the erection of a chapel to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Something rose up in me for the first time since I became a religious—oh, how base and unworthy!—and I said, somewhat brusquely: ‘But I would rather keep it, Mother, as it was given me for myself.’ She looked greatly surprised, as she answered that such a gift was far too valuable for one who had vowed herself to holy poverty; adding that it would be better in that case to return it to the donor. I replied: ‘Why, that would be an insult, Mother. And how can such a trifle hurt either me or the virtue of holy poverty?’ I spoke with a sneer; my old self asserted its dominion on the instant. The superior looked at me in surprise,—I might better say she looked *through* me. I firmly believe at that moment she read the depths

of my soul. She was a woman after God's own heart, and on such as she does He often bestow the gift of divination. 'My child,' she said, sternly and yet compassionately, 'go to the chapel, and then come to me.' I made no reply, and she left the room. I heard her swift, light step resound through the empty corridor, and the door of her room open and close.

"I looked about me. At one end of the long hall a Sister had already begun to light the lamps. It was growing dark,—in autumn the day fades quickly once the sun has gone down. A sudden temptation seized me,—a horrible disgust of my life as well as the falsehood I was living. Oh, believe me, good Mother! it was not *all* evil—that thought, that desire so quickly put into execution. Something of shame, of detestation of my conduct, was mingled with it: I felt myself to be unworthy to remain longer in that abode of virtue. I might have gone from it openly in the day-time, perhaps you may tell me, with the consent of my superior, with my vows remitted. Oh, yes! I know. But I did not: I went like a thief in the night, as I had entered. A long cloak belonging to

one of the boarders hung upon the wall: the girl was about my own height and figure. Swift as the thought that suggested itself to my mind, I stole up to the wardrobe, took one of her dresses from the drawer and returned to the music-room. On the table lay a scarf that one of the children had been knitting. I seized it, removed the needles and fastened the ends of the thread. In the little drawer of my desk was some money paid me during the day by some pupils. I took it out and counted it: it amounted to twenty dollars.

“Once more I looked around, and saw no one. The Sisters were all in the chapel at this hour. It was now quite dark. Quickly removing my veil and habit, I put on the dress. Snatching the cloak from the nail, I wrapped it about me; and, tying the scarf over my head, flew along the corridor and down the stairs, so noiselessly that I could have thought myself a ghost rushing to its doom. Once in the yard, I bethought me of the gate, always locked before dark. My soul quite sickened as I approached it. Oh, joy! by what strange chance had the portress forgotten it that evening? Do not shrink, dearest

Mother, when I tell you that I thanked *the evil spirit* at that moment for my opportunity. Throwing it wide open, I cast one look behind me. In the distance I could see the portress, with the lantern swinging in her hand, hastening to fulfil the duty she had overlooked. The memory of that moment—that last glimpse of paradise—has never left me.

“Though neither dreading pursuit nor fearing recognition, once on the street I ran quickly in the direction of the long bridge I had daily seen through the windows of the music-rooms. I had thought it spanned a river, but it proved to be only a canal. A boat was anchored at the foot of some slimy steps. A woman stood in the doorway. Approaching her, I asked the destination of the boat. She told me the name of a town some sixty miles distant. I asked her if they would take a passenger. She replied of course, if I had money to pay. She called her husband, and the bargain was quickly made—but why these unnecessary details? I desired to leave the city of N. far behind me, and I accomplished my desire.

“At first I was prosperous—yes, for

many years; that is, if to have enough meat and drink and clothes and kindly acquaintances be prosperity. But still the worm was gnawing my soul with its double-edged tooth, and has never left me at peace for a moment from that hour. All who had known and the few who had loved me thought me dead or demented or lost. Into my father's house I might never again set my foot; from that second home, which might have been for me the outer portal of heaven, I was forever banished. From the hour I set the seal upon my own fate until I came here, good Mother, I never entered a Catholic church, or spoke to a priest, or exchanged a word with any woman in the garb of a religious. But from my window in the R——'s Building, where I lived for several years, I saw the foundations of this Home laid, the building rise, and the spire of the chapel with its little cross ascend; and when at last the Little Sisters came to occupy it, I loved to watch them coming and going from day to day, receiving their charges, talking with them on the porches and in the garden, and going about begging for them through the streets of the city.

"And so at last, when old age crept on apace, and poverty knocked loudly at my door, I began to have a deadly fear of dying as I had lived; and, though I did not dare then, and have not dared since I came into this blessed shelter, to *pray* for the forgiveness and the opportunity so undeserved, I *have* dared to hope that the prayers of others, the nearness of virtue and holiness, would do something for me in my last extremity. O dear, dear, good Mother, may it be? O *you* that were little Fanny Donnelly in that time so long ago, tell me is it too late,—will the priest come to me, that I may be forgiven, and die in the peace of God, with the hope of a favorable judgment?"

"Poor thing! poor thing!" answered the weeping nun. "He *will* come,—I will send for him at once. And now let us thank God," she added, detaching the crucifix from her rosary and placing it in the hands of the dying woman, who kissed it again and again, with a fervor that must have been a pleasing sight to the Guardian Angel who had walked beside her unseen, but perhaps not all unheeded, through so many bitter, wasted years.

XXV.

TWO HEROINES.

Thousands of miles away from the abode of peace and charity, portions of the lives of whose inmates I have from time to time endeavored feebly to portray for the edification and sympathy of the readers of Our Lady's magazine, I can at any moment picture before my mind's eye the pathetic old faces, the bent forms and trembling limbs of those blessed among God's poor who have had the good fortune to spend their last days under the ministrations of the Little Sisters. I hear once more their kindly salutations, their expressions of patient resignation, of heartfelt gratitude to the self-sacrificing women who have dedicated their lives to the service of age and poverty. Witty sallies, too, recur to me, and merry words of cheer; for, in the main, these wards of charity have light hearts and a ready tongue.

Again I am kneeling behind the long

rows of benches where—the men on one side, the women on the other—they are fervently reciting the Rosary. German, Irish and English are mingled in the pious responses; with here and there an occasional *Sainte Marie, Mère de Dieu*, or *Santa Maria, Madre de Dios*, bringing home forcibly to the mind that the charity of the Church of God knows no distinction of nationality or even faith; for close at my side a Lutheran Protestant is seated, calmly surveying the assembled multitude, and probably praying in his own fashion. In front of me a mulatto woman is kneeling, absorbed in her devotions; while almost directly opposite are two negro men, feeble and decrepit; one—a Protestant—sitting with head slightly bent, while his lips move slowly; the other slipping a pair of well-worn beads through his fingers, while, in the most musical of rich African voices, he devoutly answers the "Our Father" and "Hail Mary."

It is not unusual among the very poor, especially the Irish poor, to find two old women living together, sharing each other's burdens, and dividing the small income or alms that keep soul and body together.

It is only when all other resources are exhausted—when old age, poverty, and disease leave them utterly helpless,—that they finally consent to enter that refuge, in default of which many of them would be obliged either to go to the poor-house or die of starvation. Therefore it often happens that, after many difficulties, the Little Sisters succeed in persuading two friends and companions like those to whom my story relates to accept the kind hospitality of the Home for the rest of their days; and in such circumstances they are very careful to represent to the poor old pensioners that they shall be allowed to associate with each other as before; and that, though in the midst of new scenes and companions, they will not be separated.

Such were the circumstances under which Mary Monahan and Katie Ryan had been received at the Home for the Aged in C——. They had lived together for many years in a large tenement house in the city, whither the Little Sisters came weekly to visit the sick and infirm; and from which, despite the poverty of the numerous dwellers in the immense building, they seldom went without a few dimes.

from the charity of the least poverty-stricken among them.

Mary Monahan, the elder of the two, was a woman of about seventy when they came to the Home. Tall, angular, with masculine features and a stern expression of countenance, the rigidity of her aspect disappeared whenever a rare and beautiful smile parted her lips, disclosing a set of white, perfect teeth that any young girl might well have been proud to own. She reminded one of nothing so much as a particular old maid who had spent her life in waging war against all kinds of household uncleanness, real or imaginary.

The other woman, Katie Ryan, commonly supposed to be Mary Monahan's niece, was much younger—about fifty-five at most; but an asthmatic affection had long left her a confirmed invalid, unable for some years previous to their coming to the Home to help earn the scanty livelihood that served them both. She was an utter contrast to her companion. She must have been beautiful in youth,—a specimen of typical Irish loveliness. Short and buxom, with a complexion that still showed a clear pink and white through the wear

and tear of years and adversity; while a pair of soft grey eyes looked timidly out from beneath long, dark lashes, giving a most attractive expression to her childish face.

The tender devotion between these two exceeded that commonly found even between mother and daughter; each deferring to the other in every respect, and anxious only for the comfort and pleasure of her companion.

One day an old woman who was sitting with them, curious to know the degree of relationship existing between them, inquired:

“Mrs. Monahan, are you aunt to Mrs. Ryan by blood or marriage?”

The two women looked at each other, both apparently taken unawares by the very simple and natural question.

“By marriage,” replied Mrs. Monahan, tersely, after a few moments’ hesitation; “though I don’t know what concern it is of any one,” she continued, in a tone which indicated that the question had disturbed her.

“There’s no call to be so snappish about it,” retorted the questioner, as she hobbled

away to inform her companions of the "snub" she had received; at the same time, with many knowing shakes of the head, giving her opinion that they were either not related at all or that they were mother and daughter; one or both with a record that they could not afford to make public; with sundry other doubts and beliefs, in which her cronies agreed with her.

After a while it came to be an accepted thing among the inmates that there was really a mystery which the two women shared. There was, to be sure, a reticence about them quite unusual with women of their age and class; and, though kindly and affable in their manner toward all, neither of them invited intimacy. They seemed to be sufficient for each other.

In the winter of 1885 the elder woman had a paralytic stroke, and from that time until she died was unable to leave her bed. Her friend watched over her with unremitting care and fondness; weeping and lamenting often, in her emotional Irish way, that *she* had not been stricken and the other spared; wishing that she might be allowed to suffer instead of "Mary," who lay peacefully on her bed, helpless and

patient, sorry only that she should be obliged to give trouble to the good Sisters and her faithful nurse; and declaring repeatedly, in her poor, broken voice, that she was "very, very comfortable." But she failed from day to day, till at length the doctor announced that she could not live much longer. The priest was summoned, and she made her preparation for death. Then it was that Kitty utterly refused to be comforted, giving way to the wildest lamentations and becoming hysterical in her grief.

The good Mother stood beside the bed of the dying woman, vainly endeavoring to assuage the sorrow of her devoted friend.

"Oh, don't talk to me, good Mother dear!" she exclaimed. "'Tis well I know you're for my good, but I can't help it,—I can't help it! When she goes I'll be losing more than father or mother, or sister or brother, or husband or child. Where would I be—what would I be to-day but for her? She that lost a good home on account of me, that saved me from poverty and disgrace and shame and misery; she that did for me with her two hands whilst she was able; she that I thought would bury me in the

end. Oh, vo, vo, vo, that I must see this day!"

"Hush, Kitty!" said a weak voice from the bed. "What will the good Mother think at all, at all? Restrain yourself, *alanna!* I'm happy. Sure you wouldn't keep me longer than God wills."

"Oh, I oughtn't,—I oughtn't!" sobbed Kitty. "But I'm selfish and weak, Mary. There's one thing I'll do. I'll tell the good Mother the whole story before you go. You'll not leave this till she knows what a saint of God she had under this blessed roof."

"No, no, Kitty!" pleaded Mary. "You won't do that, *asthore!* And you're only making her suspect every bad thing of you by going on that way."

"Come, Kitty,—come!" said the good Mother at this juncture; for the cheeks of the dying woman had grown pink, and her eyes were shining with excitement and apprehension. Leaving the patient in charge of another Sister, she led the weeping woman away from the infirmary, bidding her go to the chapel to find consolation for her breaking heart.

But poor Kitty's feelings had been so

wrought up that quiet and even prayer were impossible until she had relieved her mind of its burden. Kneeling on the floor, her face in the good Mother's lap, she begged her to listen to the tale she had to tell. The gentle nun could not further oppose her; and when she returned to the infirmary, she bore with her the knowledge of the life-history of the two women,—a knowledge which gave her, for the one fast approaching eternity, a feeling of admiration mingled with the reverence that always attaches to an act or a life of devoted heroism.

“And did you quiet her, good Mother dear?” asked Mary, as the Sister once more took a seat beside her.

“Yes,” was the reply. “I left her lying on the bed, promising to call her at once in case you should take a change.”

“I won't,” said the sick woman, in a soft, low voice. “I'll not die suddenly. I'll just go out gradually, as the candle flame dies. And don't give a thought to what she said in her distracted grief, good Mother. Sure you've only to look in Kitty's face to know that she's like a child—as simple and—”

"She has told me all, Mary," said the good Mother; "and I think Our Lord has a beautiful throne prepared for you in heaven."

The dying woman started. "She did that, good Mother! She told you! Well, if she did, I must tell you again; for she gave it her own color—as *she* saw it. It's my duty now to tell you *my* part of it. Maybe you won't think so much of me then, good Mother, as you do now,—no, no! You couldn't."

"Spare yourself, Mary," said the Sister. "You are so weak, and you are too humble. What does it matter now?"

"O good Mother dear, let me tell you!" she pleaded. "Sure she was but a slip of a girl, and always a child, some way. Such a weak, coaxing, innocent creature, good Mother. I'll go slow. I'll take a sup of the wine before I begin, to strengthen me; but I can't die leaving you to think Kitty what she's not. Oh, what did she tell you at all?"

"She told me that she went away with your husband, and described your heroic charity toward them afterward."

"She saw only the outside and heard

the words of my mouth. She never knew, or none but God's priests in confession knew, the thoughts of my heart and the purpose of my mind. And that, with the help of our Saviour and His Holy Mother, I'll tell you before I go to His judgment-seat. I know you'll be kind to her as ever when I'm gone, good Mother; but I can't die till I give you the *right* story."

There was nothing else to be done. A new strength came to her voice and a new light to her eye as the pallid, stern-featured old woman, her hand clasped in that of the religious, related her story.

"I was a proud girl, good Mother,—the only daughter of respectable and well-to-do parents in N——, Co. Tipperary. I was nicely reared, and had high notions about things, that maybe didn't befit me; but we are as our nature is, and it's hard to change. By reason of that and other things, I went without being married till I was past twenty-five; and that was considered old in those days. This boy was too rough, and that one too careless, and the other too fond of his own way or of his glass. 'Twas all equal, anyhow; and my father and mother fretted that I wouldn't be said by them,

and marry and settle down when I had good offers.

“Finally there came a young man from Dublin selling goods, and my father made him welcome to the house. We lived behind the shop and were nicely fixed. He was younger than I—this strange man,—and he had a very taking manner with him. My father was greatly pleased with his ways; and, not to make my tale too long, the match was settled three days after he came to the town. The wedding was to be in the spring; and my mother went to work, spinning and sewing and making ready.

“I had a little cousin in Dublin, nursemaid to a lady that came down to N—once for the sea-bathing and took Kitty back with her. She was my mother’s sister’s child, and had been raised from infancy under our roof. I was very fond of her. Being eight years older, she seemed a girl to me; and so she was—hardly seventeen. Nothing would do my mother but that Cornelius should find her out, and bring back word of her when he came again. Well, he did; and, as he kept coming and going all the winter, he’d bring a message now

and then from her. The letters were dear in those times; and, to save the post, I'd give him a bit of a line to Kitty whenever he came.

“'Twas about Christmas-time when one day he arrived on a sudden. He told us he'd been to London, and that it was a grand city altogether. I minded afterward that he wasn't a bit uneasy in his ways, but just as light-hearted as ever. He was what you'd call a handsome man, with shining black hair and pink cheeks. Likely I wasn't made for the love of any man, good Mother; for 'twas my pride that was wrapped up in him, not my heart. And some way, down in the depths of it, proud as I was, I felt from the very beginning that it was my father's little penny he was after more than myself; for I wasn't the kind of girl the like of him would fancy,—him that was so fond of a gay song and a lively dance and a funny joke. I was a quiet creature always, and thought cold by them that didn't know me. Sometimes I wonder how I ever took up with him at all, unless 'twas a fine-sounding thing in my ears to be married to a bright, handsome boy from Dublin.

"Along toward Easter he came down and said he had bad news for us. Kitty had left her place of a sudden, and he could get no information of her. My mother fretted, and so did I; but—God forgive me!—she was not the first thing in my thoughts at that time; for all was for the marriage. I was to go up to Dublin after it, for that was his headquarters, and the girls were all envying me my good luck. But after it was over, and I settled in my own rooms in Dublin city, the first thing I did was to hunt up Kitty. My heart felt very sore when her lady told me she had got a beau some time during the past summer—a handsome young fellow, she said,—that seemed to turn the girl's head altogether from her work and her place. And in December she had gone away of a sudden, taking her box and all belonging to her; and that was all that was known.

"I went back to my lodgings with a heavy heart, expecting help and sympathy from Cornelius; but he gave me the first cross word when I told him of it, and bade me not bother in the quest of her. If she was all right, he said, she'd turn up some time; but he doubted *if* she was. Any

way, she had treated those that raised her very ungrateful; and the less said and done about her, the better. So I sat down and wrote to my mother, as he bade me, that I could find no tidings of her.

“Very soon I had my fill of another sorrow: my father and mother both died of a bad sore throat that was going round that winter. Cornelius and I went down to sell out the little furniture and goods, and arrange everything. I found myself with two hundred pounds to my fortune; and when we went back again to Dublin, my husband wanted that I should put it in a small haberdasher’s shop. He thought we could do well at that; he said it would be more comfortable, too, for him than to be travelling about as he was. Of late I had noticed him occasionally under the influence of drink, and I thought it came from being away so often and mingling with all sorts of people, as one meets travelling.

“Without more ado, I put the money in his hand, for him to bank it; and the next morning when I rose there was a note on the table saying: ‘Mary, I’m gone to America. Don’t search for me: you’ll never find me.’ When I got over the first

shock I went down to the bank. I found fifty pounds there to my credit; he had not been quite bad enough to leave me penniless. I had a great struggle with myself to know what would I do, and at long last made up my mind to go to London,—for my friends at home, I knew, I could never face again. What to do when I got there I left to the Providence of Almighty God and the help of His ever-blessed Mother. I had made but few friends in Dublin, and I stole away from it like a thief in the night,—ashamed to face those that might be asking me questions. I had a pang of conscience, moreover, that I had neglected Kitty so long. In London I felt sure I would find her, poor girl! And the hope of seeing her buoyed me up in my trouble.

“To London I went, and many an up and down I had there; but no sign of Kitty did I see, nor did I ever hear tell of her for two years or more. One rainy night I was hurrying home from the slop-shop where I sewed, when I met a woman coming out of a little court, a jug in her hand. She hadn’t changed much, though her clothes were poor and faded. ’Twas my own little Kitty. She knew me at

once, and I went along with her to the baker's for her jug of milk. Then I followed her up the dark, dirty stairs to a miserable excuse of a room. She opened the door. I saw a man lying on the bed.

“‘Cornelius,’ says she, ‘who do you think I met? My cousin Mary, from N——.’ There was no answer. She turned up the light and went over to him. Too late for my scorn or reproach, too late for my forgiveness had he wanted it, he lay there dead—my husband and the man that had deceived poor Kitty. Oh, it was then I had a terrible half hour, good Mother! The seven evil spirits seemed to be let loose in my soul, and I lashed her with bitter words,—her that had betrayed me and mine and ruined herself forever. She sat there beside the dead man, her head in her hands, and never a word came from her lips till I was done.

“‘Mary,’ said she then, ‘the man that’s gone to his God this night wronged you and he wronged me; let the Almighty judge him. But I’m not the guilty thing you think me, for I never knew he was married to you. When were you married?’

“‘You poor unfortunate creature!’ I

cried, 'I was his wife well on to three years when you ran away from Dublin with him.' And then, as I thought of the deception that had been done by the both of them, I rushed out of the house.

"My passion was cooled by the morning, and my heart yearned for the poor thing, bad as I judged her; for the Blessed Mother of God had put kindly, forgiving feelings into my mind. I thought of the Magdalen; and I went out, in God's name, to meet Kitty again. It was still early in the day, but they had taken the remains away already, and Kitty was sitting alone in the poor little room. On her knees she asked my pardon for the wrong she had done me; on my knees I gave it to her, and I said:

"'Kitty, what's done is done; and I'm in a more Christian spirit this morning. If God ever put any one in another's way, He did it last night when I met you for the first time, after searching for you here in London so long. You both wronged me; but it is past now, and he is dead. You've had a hard time with him, and he has gone to a more merciful Judge than I am. There's only you and me left; and, with God's help, we'll be as we were.'

“And that’s the whole of the story, good Mother. From that day to this we were never parted; and if ever a woman atoned for a sin by repentance, and kindness to all sinners, and meekness and sweetness and charity, Kitty is that one. Bring her here to me now, good Mother, if she’s wakened; for I’m not easy when she’s away from me, especially in these last hours of my life.”

Kitty was called, and the good Mother went to other duties. All through that day she sat by the bedside, attending to every wish of the dying woman, jealous of every ministration in which she did not share. The Sisters came and went at intervals till Benediction time, when the two friends were left alone together. After it was over the good Mother hastened again to the infirmary. Kitty was on her knees, her arms clasped about the body of her departed friend, who had apparently just breathed her last. She was speaking in low, crooning tones, as one would to a little child. “Mary, Mary,” she said, “that night thirty years ago when we met upon the streets of London, I made a promise to Almighty God. I deceived you, Mary; but it was no sin. You know it all now, darling;

and you know it was no sin. Mary, Mary *asthore!* I promised in that hour that no word of mine should add one blow to your breaking heart while I lived. The word I might have spoken I never spoke; but if I did wrong, you'll forgive me now from the peace of heaven, where you'll soon be, if you're not in it already. O Mary, Mary, my poor lonely heart would be light if I could only feel for a certainty that you don't harbor it agin me!"

The good Mother attached no significance to these words at the time; but she recalled them later, when Kitty herself lay dying.

Indian summer was on the wane when Mary Monahan went home to God, and her desolate friend and companion soon followed her. A slight cough developed into pneumonia, that insidious and relentless foe of the aged and feeble. A short time previous to her death, she sent for the good Mother.

"Good Mother," she said, "I have something to tell you before I go. Maybe it's a weakness in me; for perhaps I ought to let well enough alone. I often think to myself, as I'm only a poor, lone woman,

it doesn't matter whether any one knows the truth or not; for there's no one to suffer by it now. But you've been so good to me, and were so kind to her that's gone before, I can't die easy—for I know my end is near—without telling you the truth of my story,—something that she never knew, good Mother; for I kept it from her. The day she died she told me you knew it all; and so you did, as she knew it; but *she* didn't know all. 'Twas *I* that was married to Cornelius Monahan, *not* poor Mary; and that's God's blessed truth."

"I do not understand, Kitty," replied the good Mother. "How could it have been so?"

"It *was* so, and I'll tell you how, good Mother. When he came to me first where I was living, he told me not a word of how he stood with Mary and her people. I thought he was only an acquaintance. He began saying soft things to me from the first, and coaxed me into marrying him quietly. He wouldn't let me tell my cousin, because he said he had had a misunderstanding with my uncle, Mary's father. 'Twas to keep me from meeting **Mary** that he took me up to London. As

far as he could love any one, 'twas me he loved; but he married her for the money. He was a villain, good Mother; and I soon found it out, though I never knew how he had deceived us both till I met Mary in London city. I was married to him *six months before he made the sham second marriage with her.*"

"And yet you allowed her to believe that *you* had been deceived—that she was his real wife?"

"Yes, good Mother, I did; and I know God will not count it agin me. I did it for her sake. But she knows the how and why now, and 'twill be all right when we meet. I kept my marriage lines, good Mother; they're in this old chamois bag about my neck. I'd like, you'd look at them, good Mother."

With some difficulty she unfastened the bag—which was secured by a few strong stitches to the string of her Scapular,—producing at last a worn and soiled certificate of the marriage of Cornelius Monahan and Kitty Ryan. When the good Mother had read it, she replaced it in its receptacle, saying:

"I thought Mary a heroine when I heard

her story, Kitty; but now, without taking away any of her merit, I believe you are a still more admirable one. It is only in heaven that such fidelity and self-sacrifice are rewarded."

And Kitty, looking up at her with eyes smiling though tearful, answered:

"'Twould have killed her, good Mother, if she knew. Mary was a very proud woman, and he brought her sorrow and shame enough as it was."

It was on a crisp, cold morning, two days before Christmas, that they laid the faithful Kitty beside her friend and comrade. A slight flurry of snow was sprinkling the scattered graves as those who had accompanied the funeral turned to retrace their steps.

"Poor Kitty!" said Sister Emilia. "We shall miss her at Christmas; she was always so full of devotion on that day. And Mary also."

"And I was just thinking," replied the good Mother, looking upward to the fast clouding sky,—"I was just thinking to myself what a happy Christmas it will be for those two together in heaven."

.

All this and more vividly recurred to my mind the other day, as, turning over some old newspapers long stowed away and forgotten, I read in the mortality report: "Kitty Ryan. Aged seventy-two. Little Sisters of the Poor." Then and there I resolved that another story of Christian heroism should be recorded,—not the least, albeit the last, of the "Chronicles of 'The Little Sisters.'"




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